

Teacher's Perceptions About Causes of Truancy: A Sector Based Comparative Analysis at Secondary School Level

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Abstract: *The current study investigates the different causes of truancy at secondary school level in the Pakistan context. For this purpose, public and private sector secondary school teachers were selected. The population of the study were 1316 Public and Private secondary school teachers of District Attock. A total of 420 secondary school teachers from public sector (220) and private sector (200) were selected as the sample of the study. A stratified random sampling technique was used to collect data. The study was descriptive. A self-developed questionnaire based on five-point Likert's scale was used to seek the responses of the respondents. The scale was highly reliable. The study used an independent sample t.test to ascertain difference based on sectors and gender. The results reveal that teacher related causes were the most influential causes contributing to truancy. Other causes that related to family, school environment and peers were also found contributory to truancy of students. Based on findings it was recommended that teachers should be morally and emotionally trained. School environment should be attractive. Parents should be cooperative.*

Keywords: Truancy, Perception, School Environment, Media, Peers

Introduction

It is increasingly observed that students miss one or more classes without any genuine reason. This is an evolving problem that students face all over the country. Such an act of unexcused absence of students from their classes or school is called truancy. The word 'truancy' has old French origin means "absenteeism", "skipping off" and "bunking off". Oxford English Dictionary (OED) has defined truancy as "the action of staying away from school without reason". Similarly, OED defines a truant as "a pupil who stays away from school without leave or explanation". In the Pakistan education system, secondary school level starts from grade 6 to 10. Elementary school starts from grade 6 to 8 named as lower secondary school whereas, (grades 9–10) are considered upper secondary (Douthit, 2022).

This is a crucial step to pursue the higher education and vocational education. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child. It focuses on cognitive and physical needs, social and emotional development also. It is necessary to build a solid and broad foundation for well-being and lifelong learning of students (Yunusa et al., 2022).

Chronic absenteeism was deeply focused on the early grades in the previous decades. Earlier concepts of average daily attendance and truancy has been reframed and focused by special attention. It was suggested that the absenteeism in the ECCE level is a strong predictor of later absenteeism and school failure of other levels. Early childhood programs and EFA (Education for All) present an important opportunity for schools to establish lasting patterns for education and students' pressure at school. They described that the role of parents and family is effective in attendance as three- and four-year children are not independently making decisions about attending school (Kethineni et al., 2021).

The families who are homeless or between homes are facing many obstacles. They are surviving in crisis mode. Other core causes were related to family background, instability at home (parental divorce, domestic violence and conflict. All these problems combined to family chaos and trauma and directly affect attendance. It is also explained that most prevalent health issues were also impacting attendance e.g. asthma, chronic fever and dental issues (Schmitt et al., 2021).

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Statement of the Problem

The current study has been designed to understand the teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy at secondary school level because the role of teachers is pivotal in the educational and holistic progress of organizations. The aim of this study is the analysis of teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy at public and private sector. The study would compare the differences about causes of truancy among males and females also.

Objectives

The current study formulates the following objectives:

1. To investigate the teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy at Secondary school level
2. To compare the difference in the teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy at Public and Private sector
3. To analyze the gender-based difference of teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy

Significance of the Study

The current study is valuable because it provides teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy that are helpful in the 21st century for educational administrators, teachers and policy makers also. By comprehending these causes, administrators, educational experts and head teachers and teachers can improve their strategies at all levels that can provide pleasant environment to organizations.

Literature Review

The objectives of the research were to investigate the teachers' perceptions about different causes of truancy. The following main sections have been represented by the literature review a) What is truancy b) truancy is a main and powerful obstacle at secondary school level c) background, historical perspective d) causes, ratio and after effects of truancy, universal prevention and intervention strategies, perspective of truancy in various developed countries, perspective of truancy in developing countries and definition of perception (Mokoena & Van Breda, 2021).

What is Truancy?

Truancy is the term which is used to describe school absenteeism. It is an intentional absence on the part of learner. Students absent themselves without the willingness of their parents. They argued truancy as a multi- dimensional experience and a unique case of various psychological, social, and institutional causes that contribute to the learner's truant behavior. Truancy is a major behavioral problem at all levels of education in the world (Olumoya, 2021).

Researchers of social sciences and educators have defined it in different ways. Some defined truancy as unexcused absence from school. While others have specified it as a number of days that the students will have been absent to qualify as habitual truant. The views of National Center for School Engagement suggested that a habitual truant is a student who has 4 to 5 days of unexcused absences in a semester (Gideon & Eremie, 2023)

Truancy is a Main Obstacle at ECCE Level

Many researchers explained that truancy is an intentional unexcused absence by the student. On the other hand, forced truancy, which is the topic of this study, is defined as unexcused absence from school. It is caused by teachers' bad actions, students' poverty, lack of educational infrastructures and unsecure educational environment. There should be a motivation campaign for the parents. The school infrastructure should be developed. Physical appearance and disciplined environment of school is also responsible for the enrollment. The period of this intervention (establishment of ECE rooms) is almost one academic year (Gideon & Eremie, 2023).

From the untiring struggle and hard work of different campaigns, it is expected that the situation may be improved in upcoming years. It has been explained that moral and emotional stability of teachers is vital for reduction of truancy. If the training is strong, holistic and positive, it provides a solid foundation for that may constructively influence enrollment and attendance of students at school. Physical facilities

are also required for creating attraction in school environment. Teachers should motivate and guide their students towards critical thinking. Development of critical thinking skills at secondary school level is the demand of 21st century. The role of educators is very important for the development of critical thinking skill because this is a foundation of behavior development for every level of education (Fredriksson et al., 2023).

Background, Historical Perspective: Different educators have argued that to build and maintain a foundation for ongoing learning and academic success throughout life, it is important to maintain consistent attendance on the part of learners. If we want to increase students' learning capabilities, it is important that they should be regular in school. Truants miss essential instruction which cannot be repeated again. They miss very important lectures that are delivered through ongoing conversation and regular discussion in the classroom. Truant students have few chances to learn the lessons that are necessary for them to succeed later in school (Fredriksson et al., 2023).

Regular students in school are also impacted when their teachers pay their attention to those classmates who have missed mostly of their classes. Truant students have bad impression on their teachers and on their peers also. Although they are a minority of school but their attitudes and learning behavior can disturb attention of their teachers. From many years' educators, social justice experts, psychologists and different other researchers have suggested that to define absenteeism is a difficult task. Psychologists have used different terms for absenteeism such as divorce anxiety, fear of school, refusal of school and refusal bad behavior (Mokoena & Van Breda, 2021).

There are so many causes that are essential for many programs and activities. There are four risk factors of truancy:

Family Related Causes: Family related causes are those causes which learners have to face in their homes. All these are hurdles in their studies. Some of these are poverty of parents, unawareness about attendance, harsh attitude towards education and different other bad habits as drug addiction (Yunusa et al., 2022).

School Environment Related Causes: School environment related causes are all those causes which learners face in school. Some of these are school infrastructure, behavior of teacher, peers' attitudes and inflexible attitudes towards meeting different learning styles (Yunusa et al., 2022).

Financial Causes: Financial causes are about employed parents of students; parents occupied in multiple jobs, single parent homes, lack of transport facilities etc. (Yunusa et al., 2022).

Student related Causes: Lack of social dealing and adjustment, unawareness of attendance laws and physical and mental health problems. It has been noted that effects of bullying on truancy are very powerful. No authentic evidence is about linkage between truancy and bullying. An OJJDP study approved that bullied students were always absent and below achievers in their studies (Yunusa et al., 2022).

Truancy has many risk factors for young learners, but family background and financial causes have the major impact on chronic absenteeism in early elementary school. It has been reported by the study that children who come from poor families and low-income communities are more sufferer than children who come from rich families. All these risk factors include illiterate mother, ill mother, unemployed mother and insecure hygiene provision etc. Children who face such risk factors are sufferer than their peers who have not such risks (Gideon & Eremie, 2023)

Ratio of Truancy

To find authentic and reliable data about truancy is very difficult. An act No Child Left Behind (NCLB) held a survey at the beginning of 2005–2006. But they cannot provide complete aggregate due to difference of definitions of truancy in different states. Some national data sets give us definitions about chronic absenteeism and students of various ages. National Center for Children and Poverty (NCCP) conducted a study and demonstrated chronic absenteeism among kindergartners. After study of five years NCCP found that first graders were more in chronic absenteeism. Kindergartners were at risk due to poverty, uneducated mother or below in education (NCCP, 2008). One another study conducted a survey about eighth grade students and 10th grade students. They were also found truants (Yunusa et al., 2022).

After Effects of Truant Behavior on our Education System

Truancy has many harmful after affects. All these are for students, their parents, schools, families and communities. Truancy also affects academic achievement of students and school. A literature review by the National Center for School Engagement, found that, truants had below mentioned position in their studies than non-truants (Gideon & Eremie, 2023).

1. Poor academic records during studies.
2. They are often repeaters.
3. They have high rates of struck off and detention.
4. Their high school graduation level is very below.

Chronic absenteeism at early stage has long term after affects. Those students who were chronic absent in kindergarten were also truants during them after studies. It is fact that early absenteeism affects school achievement not only at early stage, but it has long term after affects. Students who become truants at early stage, they become frightened from school environment and cannot carry on their studies to graduation level (Gideon & Eremie, 2023).

In past, some schools had adopted harsh policies about truancy. From these actions they had improved their academic achievement. All their achievements were useless because they were creator of different societal problems. National Center for Children and Poverty (NCCP) has described different crimes which are outcome of truancy e.g. delinquency, serious criminal behavior, robbery and suicidal act of people (Fredriksson et al., 2023).

Truancy affects youth as well as adults when they become. Adults who were chronic truants in childhood or adolescence face many problems e.g. poverty, irritant behavior with others, poor physical and mental health. No doubt, truancy affects not only academic achievements of students, but it affects their behavior and health. All these problems can be covered by positive approach. Different studies have proved that all kinds of crimes can be declined by effective truancy reduction programs (Mokoena & Van Breda, 2021).

Traditional Truancy Reduction School Policies

In past, truancy was handled by calling parents when students provide improper report about absence. Many schools resolved their complaints by calling the parents of students. When children did not show up at school about their proxy. Police departments also inquired students when they were found out of school during study hours or sent them to their homes (Mokoena & Van Breda, 2021).

Truancy in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Pakistan is also a developing country. It is situated in largest Continent Asia. The role of school in the life of children is very important. School develops moral, social and reasoning skills of students. For all types of development, it is necessary that learners must come to school daily. But in Pakistan, the ratio of presence of students is very below. Dropout rates are increasing and alarming in Pakistan. This situation has created many other severe problems. Pakistan ranks second in all countries of world with the most out of school children (Olumoya, 2021).

From 2012, shocking report by the society for the protection of the rights of children shows that condition of Pakistan is very alarming about children out of school. Poverty of parents is also a great hurdle in the studies of their children because ratio of poverty is rising every year. Due to parents' poor condition, they take financial assistance from their children in earning and supporting their family. Because of this depressed condition, they cannot send their children to school (Gideon & Eremie, 2023).

Perception: Definition

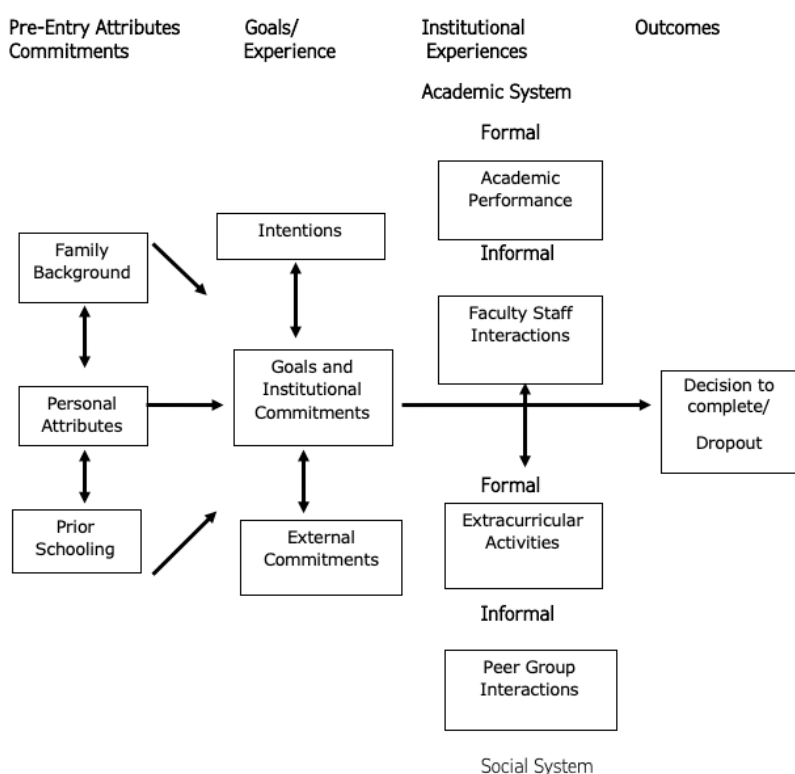
Perception is a psychological term. It is both cognitive and psychological process. It is the process of thinking which enables the mind of individuals to see the world around them as stable. Although the sensory information is typically incomplete and rapidly varying. There are three components of perception (Knudsen et al., 2021).

1. **The Perceiver or Selection:** The person who becomes aware about something and comes to a final understanding (Knudsen et al., 2021).
2. **The Target or Organization:** The target is the person who is being perceived or judged (Knudsen et al., 2021).
3. **The Situation or Interpretation:** The situation also greatly influences perceptions because different situations call for additional information and interpretation (Knudsen et al., 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Tinto's model was first offered in his publication, Vincent Tinto proposed a model of student departure. This model also focused on the importance of student intermingling into both the academic and social life of organization. He explained three main areas that influenced students' departure. There are unresolved educational and occupational goals, academic difficulties and lack of integration into intellectual and social fabric of the organization.

Tinto's Model of Departure



Source: [www.https://corneliathinks.wordpress.com/2016/09/20/tintos-model](https://corneliathinks.wordpress.com/2016/09/20/tintos-model)

Methodology

The study was quantitative and descriptive in nature. Questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants.

Population and Sampling: According to the feasibility of resources and monitory constraints this study was delimited to all the public and private secondary school teachers of district Attock. 1316 secondary school teachers from District Attock, teaching at secondary school level were the population of study. Sample of the study was 420 secondary School Teachers from public (N=220) and private (N=200). The sample of the study was selected from six tehsils of District Attock by stratified random sampling technique.

Research Instrument: To obtain the demographic data, a self-designed demographic Performa was used. A research instrument was self-developed questionnaire. This questionnaire comprised of 30 questions.

The questionnaire was designed on five-point Likert's scale. The instrument was validated through experts' opinions and pilot study. After incorporating the experts' suggestions, the instrument was administered to 420 teachers, teaching at secondary school level. To make research instrument reliable Cronbach's Alpha (a) test was applied. The reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha (a) was 0.939.

Data Collection and Analysis: Data was collected through self-visit. Respondents were briefed about the study. They were informed about the secrecy of the data. They were also briefed about the usage of data that it will be only used for research purpose. After the data collection through questionnaires, the process of data interpretation was started. After obtaining the responses from the participants, the data was organized, classified, tabulated and analyzed. Responses i.e., SA (Strongly Agree), A(Agree), UN(Undecided), DA(Disagree) and SDA (Strongly Disagree) were rated as 5,4,3,2,1 respectively. For the analysis of data, independent sample t-test by SPSS was employed. The agreement level of mean values was 2.5 while disagreement level of mean values was less than 2.5.

Results

Table 1

There were Six Causes of Truancy at Secondary School Level in District Attock. These are as:

School environment related Causes
Teacher related causes
Student related causes
Peer related causes
Family Background related causes
Electronic Media related causes

Reliability

To make research instrument reliable Cronbach's Alpha test was applied. Reliability of different items is shown in table 2 as under:

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha Value for Different Causes

Items	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
School environment related Causes	07	0.976
Teacher related causes	05	0.961
Student related causes	06	0.804
Peer related causes	04	0.960
Family Background related causes	05	0.937
Electronic Media related causes	03	0.969
Average	05	0.939

The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (0.939) suggested excellent internal consistency reliability for the scale employed in the study. The scale consisted of 30 items. This reliability ensures that the survey instrument appropriately captures the variables of the study.

Table 3

Distribution of Sample from Public and Private Sector

Causes	Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
School Environment Related Causes	Public	220	4.6701	.20133	.01357
	Private	200	4.7057	.18038	.01276
Teacher Related Causes	Public	220	4.8527	.19336	.01304
	Private	200	4.8560	.19248	.01361
Student Related Causes	Public	220	4.7576	.14879	.01003
	Private	200	4.7583	.14921	.01055

Causes	Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Family Background	Public	220	4.7455	.08928	.00602
Related Causes	Private	200	4.7450	.08953	.00633
Peer Related Causes	Public	220	4.5102	.34482	.02325
	Private	200	4.4875	.35244	.02492
Electronic Media	Public	220	4.4894	.64452	.04345
Related Causes	Private	200	4.4167	.70235	.04966

Table 4

Description of Difference between Sectors (Public & Private)

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
School Environment	EVA	3.477	.063	-1.900	418	.058	-.03558	.01872	-.07239	.00122
Related Causes	EVNA			-1.910	417.914	.057	-.03558	.01863	-.07220	.00103
Teacher Related Causes	EVA	.121	.728	-.174	418	.862	-.00327	.01885	-.04033	.03378
	EVNA			-.174	414.567	.862	-.00327	.01885	-.04032	.03377
Student Related Causes	EVA	.011	.917	-.052	418	.959	-.00076	.01456	-.02937	.02786
	EVNA			-.052	413.993	.959	-.00076	.01456	-.02938	.02786
Family Background	EVA	.011	.917	.052	418	.959	.00045	.00873	-.01671	.01762
Related Causes	EVNA			.052	413.993	.959	.00045	.00874	-.01672	.01763
Peer Related Causes	EVA	.086	.769	.668	418	.505	.02273	.03405	-.04420	.08965
	EVNA			.667	412.319	.505	.02273	.03408	-.04427	.08972
Electronic Media	EVA	8.238	.004	1.107	418	.269	.07273	.06572	-.05646	.20191
Related Causes	EVNA			1.102	404.763	.271	.07273	.06599	-.05700	.20245

*EVA=Equal Variance Assumed

**EVNA=Equal Variance Not Assumed

The current research utilized an independent sample t-test to examine the teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy in public and private sector. Table 4 summarizes the results of the t-test for independent samples. The results in table 4 show that both public and private sectors' teachers' perceptions exhibit slight difference in school environment related causes ($t(418) = -1.9, p=.05$). Table 3 shows no difference in teachers' perceptions about teacher related causes of truancy in public and private sector ($t(418) = -.17, p=.86$). The teachers' perceptions about student related causes exhibit no difference in public and private sector ($t(418) = -.05, p=.95$). Moreover, teachers' perceptions about family background related causes in public and private sector show no significant difference ($t(418) = .05, p=.95$). The teachers' perceptions about peer related causes in public and private sector also show significant difference ($t(418) = .66, p=.50$). The teachers' perceptions about electronic media related causes of public and private sector show no significant difference ($t(418) = 1.1, p=.26$).

Table 5

Gender Based Distribution of Sample

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
School Environment Related Causes	Male	170	4.6992	.18587	.01426
	Female	250	4.6789	.19640	.01242
Teacher Related Causes	Male	170	4.8541	.19311	.01481
	Female	250	4.8544	.19285	.01220
Student Related Causes	Male	170	4.7569	.14853	.01139
	Female	250	4.7587	.14930	.00944

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Family Background Related Causes	Male	170	4.7459	.08912	.00683
	Female	250	4.7448	.08958	.00567
Peer Related Causes	Male	170	4.4882	.35231	.02702
	Female	250	4.5070	.34595	.02188
Electronic Media Related Causes	Male	170	4.4078	.71128	.05455
	Female	250	4.4867	.64493	.04079

Table 6

		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
School Environment Related Causes	EVA	1.170	.280	1.063	418	.289	.02030	.01911	-.01726	.05786
	EVNA			1.074	375.949	.284	.02030	.91	-.01688	.05748
Teacher Related Causes	EVA	.001	.977	-.015	418	.988	-.00028	.01918	-.03799	.03742
	EVNA			-.015	362.720	.988	-.00028	.01919	-.03801	.03745
Student Related Causes	EVA	.060	.807	-.122	418	.903	-.00180	.01481	-.03092	.02731
	EVNA			-.122	364.305	.903	-.00180	.01480	-.03090	.02729
Family Background Related Causes	EVA	.060	.807	.122	418	.903	.00108	.00889	-.01639	.01855
	EVNA			.122	364.305	.903	.00108	.00888	-.01638	.01854
Peer Related Causes	EVA	.082	.775	-.542	418	.588	-.01876	.03465	-.08687	.04934
	EVNA			-.540	358.628	.590	-.01876	.03477	-.08714	.04961
Electronic Media Related Causes	EVA	9.904	.002	-1.179	418	.239	-.07882	.06686	-.21024	.05260
	EVNA			-1.157	338.890	.248	-.07882	.06812	-.21281	.05516

*EVA=Equal Variance Assumed

**EVNA=Equal Variance Not Assumed

Table 6 summarizes the results of the gender based independent sample t-test. The results in table 6 show the male and female teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy at secondary school level. The results in table 6 found that both male and female teachers exhibit no statistical significant difference in teacher related causes ($t(418) = -.01, p=.98$), school environment related causes ($t(418) = 1.0, p=.28$), student related causes ($t(418) = -.12, p=.90$) and family background related causes ($t(418) = .12, p=.90$). Table 6 found significant difference in male and female teachers' perceptions about peer related causes ($t(418) = -.54, p=.58$). The results show that male and female teachers' perceptions about electronic media related causes show slight significant statistical difference ($t(418) = 1.1, p=.07$).

Discussion

Objective No.1 was about to explain the teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy at Secondary school level. The data analysis revealed that the teachers of public and private sector were at highest level in teacher related causes about truancy (Mean=4.85, Sd=.19). On the other hand, the teachers of private sector were at highest level in the school environment related causes (Mean=4.70, Sd=.18). Both sectors were similar in the practice of student related causes (Mean=4.70, Sd=.14), family background related causes (Mean=4.74, Sd=.08). The peer related causes about truancy showed difference in public (Mean=4.51, Sd=.34) and in private (Mean=4.48, Sd=.35). The electronic media related causes also showed slight difference in public (Mean=4.48, Sd=.64) and private sector (Mean=4.41, Sd=.70). The current research revealed different causes and strategies to resolve this problem. Tinto's model of student departure is a theoretical lens in this entire study (Gideon & Eremie, 2023).

The second objective was about to assess the difference in the teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy at Secondary school level in public and private sector. Teachers' perceptions show that in both public and private sector causes of truancy were practiced at equal ratio except in peer related causes and electronic media related causes there was a significant statistical difference in the teachers' perceptions

about causes of truancy in the public and private sector. The data analysis revealed that causes of truancy are practiced on the highest level in both public and private sector. The individual differences are also experienced in the past studies also (Gideon & Eremie, 2023).

The third objective was about to assess the difference in the teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy in the public and private sector on gender based. The data analysis revealed that the gender-based teachers' perceptions about causes of truancy were same in teacher related causes, students and family background related causes. Whereas there was a slight difference between male and female in the perceptions about school environment (Mean=4.69, Sd=.18) male (Mean=4.67, Sd=.19). Both male and female teachers' perceptions were found at the lowest level in the electronic media related causes, male (Mean=4.40, Sd=.71) female (Mean=4.48, Sd=.64). Not a single cause can be held responsible for early and after years' children' enrollment, development and learning. Teachers' moral and emotional development is very vital for students' holistic development at secondary school level. If it is effective, constructive and positive, it provides a solid foundation that may influence students' development at secondary school level. School infrastructure to be developed. Physical facilities required to need improve at secondary school level. Parents can be motivated for regularity of students at their classes by counselling and guidance. Students' physical, cognitive, moral and social development is the foremost obligation of teacher. Teachers must play their important role in the development of these core skills (Gideon & Eremie, 2023).

Recommendations

Following are the recommendations based on the conclusions and discussions for reducing truancy at secondary school level students

1. There is a dire need for the professional development of teachers. So, they can fulfill the psychological needs of students.
2. Institutions' physical environment at secondary school level should be equipped and attractive for teenage students. Following resources as reading materials, playing materials and instructional materials should be available for students.
3. Campaigns should be started for the awareness of parents. Parents should be encouraged for increase of enrollment.
4. Students' social needs should be enhanced by counselling so; they miss their peers when at home.
5. Parents should be given awareness about the physical health of their children.
6. Electronic devices should be used by parents and students positively and at minimum level.
7. A similar study may be conducted in other districts of Punjab province.

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