RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INVOLUNTARY ABSENTEEISM AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ALEBTONG DISTRICT. A DESCRIPTIVE CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.

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Abstract

Background

Involuntary student absenteeism in secondary schools is when students have to miss school due to unavoidable circumstances and cannot attend school regularly, despite there being hardship associated with it. The study aims to assess the relationship between involuntary absenteeism and the academic performance of students in secondary schools in the Alebtong district.

Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted where quantitative data was collected. A sample size of 115 respondents which included 87 students in candidate class (s.4), 24 teachers, and 4 members of the Board of Governors.

Results

There was also a negative correlation between involuntary absenteeism and academic performance (-0.323**)., there is a decrease of 0.390 units in academic performance. This coefficient is also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that involuntary absenteeism has a negative association with academic performance. The R-squared value of 0.630 suggests that 63% of the variation in academic performance can be accounted for by involuntary absenteeism. On student illnesses, this factor was perceived to have a high impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance. The mean response was 4.2 suggesting that respondents disagreed that students often fall ill and get hospitalized, resulting in missed lessons, exams, and assignments. This indicates that respondents believed student illnesses significantly affect academic performance.

Conclusion

Student illnesses, family emergencies, and inadequate resources have a high impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance in secondary schools in the Alebtong district. Heavy rainfall and flooding, teacher strikes, and natural disasters were perceived to have a lower impact.

Recommendation

Efforts should be made to address and mitigate student illnesses and chronic health conditions. This can include implementing health education programs in schools, providing access to healthcare facilities, and creating a supportive environment for students with health challenges.

Background of the study

Involuntary student absenteeism in secondary schools is when students have to miss school due to unavoidable circumstances and cannot attend school regularly, despite there being hardship associated with it. These can include student illnesses or emotional issues that lead them to take time off, as well as stress or pressure from family situations such as work or financial obligations (Lematango & Kathuri, 2021). Involuntary student absenteeism can have far-reaching effects, leading to academic, social, and emotional implications that affect the student and their peers negatively (McNeely, Alemu, Lee, & West, 2021). Several studies have found a strong association between health-related problems and involuntary student absenteeism Students suffering from chronic illnesses, mental health issues, or frequent illnesses are at a higher risk of missing school, leading to a negative impact on academic performance However, chronic absenteeism is increasingly identified as an important "early warning sign" that a student is at risk for school failure and early dropout. Chronic absenteeism is usually identified as missing ten percent or more of school days. Unfortunately, few schools currently can analyze attendance data to identify those students who are chronically absent (Moore, Armstrong, & Pearson, 2008). The results of absenteeism are likely to be negative as studies from the country have revealed that students who are more frequently absent from school are often weaker academically than their peers (Karppinen, Dimba, & Kitawi, 2021). Research has shown that higher rates of suspensions are associated with lower academic

performance and increased dropout rates. The study aims to assess the relationship between involuntary absenteeism and the academic performance of students in secondary schools in the Alebtong district.

Methodology

This methodology described here is similar to the one published by (Ejang & Sendagi, 2024) who documented the level of academic performance of students in secondary schools of the alebtong district.

Research Design

A descriptive, cross-sectional study was done at an appropriate point in time with no follow-ups. A quantitative approach was used to collect data.

Study Population

The study population consisted of students of senior four, all secondary teachers of the selected schools, Board of Governors of the selected secondary schools in the Alebtong district. Two schools were included because they were listed among the poorest performing districts in Alebtong District.

Sample size.

To determine the sample size, the Morgan & Kreijcie (1970) table of determining the sample size was adopted. A sample size of 115 respondents was obtained for this study who included 87 students in candidate class (s.4), 24 teachers, and 4 members of the Board of Governors as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Determination of Sample Size

School	Population		Sample size		Sampling method
	Amugu	**Akii bua**	**Amugu**	**Akii bua**	
Students	64	56	46	41	Simple random
Teachers	15	10	14	10	Purposive sampling
Board of Governors members	10	10	2	2	Convenience sampling
Total	**89**	**76**	**62**	**53**	
Grand total				**115**	

Source: Alebtong Inspector of Schools Report (2022).

Sampling Techniques

Simple random sampling, purposive sampling, and Convenience sampling techniques were used. Students were selected using a simple random sampling technique and the method was used to avoid bias on the findings since each student had the same chance of participating in the study. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers to participate in this study since they had key information relating to student absenteeism and the academic performance of students. The convenience sampling method was also used to select members of the school committee to give their views on school performances and policies on absenteeism.

Data Collection Methods

For this study, both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data was collected using questionnaires while secondary data was collected using the documentary review method.

Questionnaire Method

Questionnaires were used and designed carefully for collecting data according to the specifications of the research questions and hypotheses for the intended respondents (Amin, 2005).

Data Collection Instruments

A questionnaire with Questions that were designed in sections that fully corresponded with the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses for this study. The questions were both open-ended and close-ended to allow respondents to fill in additional information about the study variables.

Validity

To ensure the accuracy of the research instruments, the Content Validity Index was calculated using (CVI =n/N). The research supervisor as the expert to rank the accuracy of the research instrument in collecting data for the study was consulted. 17 questions were identified as relevant and only 3 as irrelevant hence the number of relevant questions (n) was divided by the total number of questions in the research instrument (17/20 = 0.85). The Content Validity Index was greater than 0.7 hence a good measure of validity and the instrument was valid to collect data for this study. The 3 irrelevant questions were eliminated from the instrument with the guidance of the supervisor.

Reliability

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability Coefficient (**a**) was calculated by running a statistical test using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) computer program using the formula stated below.
Cronbach's   is defined as
Where;   is
K number of components (K-items or test lets), the variance of the observed total test scores, and the variance of component I for the current sample of persons. The

coefficient ranges between a=0.00 for no reliability and a =1.00 for perfect reliability. The closer alpha gets to 1.0 the better. Then if the results of Cronbach'sAlpha were 0.78 and above 0.7 as proposed by Amin (2205) hence then the research instruments were reliable.

Ethical Consideration.

Permission was sought from the School of Graduate Studies and Research and obtained an introductory letter to go within the field.

- Consent was sought from the respondents to participate in the study and brief them to feel free to provide relevant information for the study. The purpose of the research project and the expected outcome of the study were explained to the respondents.
- Respondents were assured that the information provided was to be treated with maximum confidentiality and was to only be used for academic purposes.

Citation and extending gratitude to all previous researchers whose literature has contributed to this study.

Data Analysis

Before data was analyzed, it was carefully classified, edited, and coded based on clarity, completeness, accuracy, and consistency to ensure reliability. This was done using Microsoft Excel. Data was then exported to SPSS version 23 for analysis.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between the study variables. Multiple regression models were also used for the analysis of the relationship between student absenteeism and academic performance in Alebtong District.

Results

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	76	58.9%
Female	24	41.1%
Total	**100**	**100%**
Age (years)		
5-18 (Students)	75	75%
19-45	20	20%
46+	5	5%
Total	**100**	**100%**
Marital status		
Single (Students)	75	75%
Married	22	22%
Separated	1	1%
Widowed	2	2%
Total	**100**	**100%**
Level of education		
Secondary	75	75%
Diploma	8	8%
Bachelors	17	17%
Total	**100**	**100%**

According to findings in Table 2, the majority of the participants were male, accounting for 58.9% of the total sample and females represented 41.1% of the sample. Therefore, gender significantly affects. Further findings showed that the largest age group of the respondents was students aged 5-18, constituting 75% of the participants, the age group of 19-45 years accounted for 20% of the respondents and the age group of 46+ years represented the smallest proportion, with only 5% of the participants. The majority of the participants were single (students), making up 75%, followed by married individuals

accounting for 22% 1% accounted for separated, and 2% widowed. On the level of education, the majority of the participants were secondary students, accounting for 75%, 8% of the participants had a Diploma of education while 17% of the respondents had a Bachelor of Education.

Involuntary absenteeism and academic performance students in secondary schools in Alebtong district.

To explore the relationship between involuntary absenteeism and the academic performance of students in

secondary schools in the Alebtong district., the researcher used descriptive analysis of responses that were captured using a Likert 5-point scale where 1- Strongly Agree (SA), 2- Agree (A), 3-Not sure (NS), 4-Disagree (D), 5-Strongly Disagree (SD).

Table 3: Involuntary absenteeism and academic performance of students in secondary schools in the Alebtong district

	Mean	Standard deviation
Heavy rainfall and flooding always deter students from attending school due to impassable roads or dangerous conditions hence missed classes and low academic performance	1.6	0.4
Students often fall ill and get hospitalized hence unable to attend school resulting in missed lessons, exams, and assignments, leading to a decline in academic performance.	4.2	0.6
Sometimes students miss school due to family emergencies, such as the death or illness of a close family member affecting their academic progress.	4.4	0.4
Secondary schools do not have adequate resources such as textbooks, computers, or science equipment hence cancellation of certain classes or subjects hinders students' learning and impacts their academic performance.	1.3	0.4
Students also miss classes due to teachers going on strike which results in missed lessons and disruptions in their learning, affecting their academic performance.	2.2	1.4
In the event of natural disasters such as earthquakes or wildfires, schools are closed for an extended period, leading to missed classes negatively impacting students' academic performance.	1.3	0.3

According to findings in Table 3 on the statement "Heavy rainfall and flooding: This factor was perceived to have a low impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance". The mean response was 1.6 indicating that respondents strongly agreed that heavy rainfall and flooding deter students from attending school.

On student illnesses, this factor was perceived to have a high impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance. The mean response was 4.2 suggesting that respondents disagreed that students often fall ill and get hospitalized, resulting in missed lessons, exams, and assignments. This indicates that respondents believed student illnesses significantly affect academic performance.

In family emergencies, this factor was perceived to have a high impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance. The mean response of 4.4 indicates that respondents strongly disagreed that family emergencies, such as the death or illness of a close family member, affect students' academic progress. This suggests that respondents believed family emergencies have a significant impact on academic performance.

Inadequate school resources, this factor was perceived to have a low impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance. The mean response of 1.3 suggests that respondents strongly agreed that secondary schools in the Alebtong district lack adequate resources such as textbooks, computers, or science equipment. This implies that respondents believed the lack of resources leads to the cancellation of certain classes or subjects, which hinders students' learning and impacts their academic performance.

On teacher strikes, this factor was perceived to have a moderate impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance. The mean response was 2.2 indicating that respondents agreed that students miss classes due to teachers going on strike. However, the high standard deviation of 1.4 suggests there was a wide range of responses, indicating some disagreement or uncertainty among respondents about the impact of teacher strikes on academic performance.

In natural disasters, this factor was perceived to have a low impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance. The mean score of 1.3 indicates that respondents strongly agreed that in the event of natural disasters such as earthquakes or wildfires, schools are closed for an extended period, leading to missed classes. This suggests that respondents believed natural disasters have a limited impact on academic performance. Additionally, the low standard deviation of 0.3 suggests there was little variation in the responses.

In summary, the study findings indicate that student illnesses, family emergencies, and inadequate resources have a high impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance in secondary schools in the Alebtong district. Heavy rainfall and flooding, teacher strikes, and natural disasters were perceived to have a lower impact. These findings highlight the importance of addressing factors such as student health, family emergencies, and resource availability to improve academic performance in the district.

Table 4: Correlational findings between voluntary absenteeism, involuntary absenteeism, and academic performance of secondary students in Alebtong district

		Involuntary	Academic performance
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	-0.323**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	100	100

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The findings in Table 4 indicate significant correlations between involuntary absenteeism and the academic performance of secondary students in the Alebtong district.

There is also a negative correlation between involuntary absenteeism and academic performance (-0.323**). Involuntary absenteeism refers to situations where students are absent from school due to illness, emergencies, or other reasons beyond their control. This finding implies that even when students are unable to attend school for legitimate reasons, their academic performance tends to be negatively affected. This could be due to missed classroom instruction, opportunities for participation, or the inability to keep up with the curriculum while absent.

Table 5: Regression findings absenteeism and academic performance of secondary school students in Alebtong District

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.930	.664		2.908	.006
	Involuntary absenteeism	-.390	.179	-0.340	-4.986	000
Independent variable: Absenteeism						
	R square	0.630 [b]			F-statistics	10.070
	Adjusted R Square	0.357			Sig.	0.000
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.

In the model in Table 5, which focuses on involuntary absenteeism, the coefficient of -0.390 suggests that for every one-unit increase in involuntary absenteeism, there is a decrease of 0.390 units in academic performance. This coefficient is also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that involuntary absenteeism has a negative association with academic performance. The R-squared value of 0.630 suggests that 63% of the variation in academic performance can be accounted for by involuntary absenteeism.

Overall, these findings suggest involuntary absenteeism has a significant negative relationship with the academic performance of secondary school students in the Alebtong District. Students who are absent from school, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, tend to have lower academic performance compared to their peers who have better attendance records. These findings highlight the importance of addressing absenteeism among secondary school students in the district to improve their academic outcomes.

Discussion

According to findings in Table 3 on the statement "Heavy rainfall and flooding: This factor was perceived to have a low impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance". The mean response was 1.6 indicating that respondents strongly agreed that heavy rainfall and flooding deter students from attending school which would more likely cause an impact on academic performance because students would miss learning the academic content taught on those days.

On student illnesses, this factor was perceived to have a high impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance with a mean response was 4.2 suggesting that respondents disagreed that students often fall ill and get hospitalized, resulting in missed lessons, exams, and assignments significantly affecting academic performance.

In family emergencies, this factor was perceived to have a high impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance. The mean response of 4.4 indicates that respondents strongly disagreed that family emergencies, such as the death or illness of a close family member, affect students' academic progress. This suggests that respondents believed family emergencies have a significant impact on academic performance.

Inadequate school resources, this factor was perceived to have a low impact on involuntary absenteeism and

academic performance. The mean response of 1.3 suggests that respondents strongly agreed that secondary schools in the Alebtong district lack adequate resources such as textbooks, computers, or science equipment. This implies that respondents believed the lack of resources leads to the cancellation of certain classes or subjects, which hinders students' learning and impacts their academic performance.

On teacher strikes, this factor was perceived to have a moderate impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance. The mean response was 2.2 indicating that respondents agreed that students miss classes due to teachers going on strike. However, the high standard deviation of 1.4 suggests there was a wide range of responses, indicating some disagreement or uncertainty among respondents about the impact of teacher strikes on academic performance.

In natural disasters, this factor was perceived to have a low impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance. The mean score of 1.3 indicates that respondents strongly agreed that in the event of natural disasters such as earthquakes or wildfires, schools are closed for an extended period, leading to missed classes. This suggests that respondents believed natural disasters have a limited impact on academic performance. Additionally, the low standard deviation of 0.3 suggests there was little variation in the responses.

All the above findings on the correlation between involuntary factors and academic performance are similar to those of Figa, Tarekegne, and Kebede noted that continued absenteeism and poor academic achievements among students lead to dropouts from school where Students who missed class on specific dates were more likely likely likely likely to respond wrongly to questions related to material covered on that day than those students who were present. Students miss valuable information when they miss classes (Figa, Tarekegne, and Kebede, 2020). Similarly, Regine and Andala add that absence from class by students results in a 15% loss of collective class load and thus may be asked to repeat the semester or school term or be withdrawn from the program (Regine and Andala, 2021).

Conclusion
Study findings indicate that student illnesses, family emergencies, and inadequate resources have a high impact on involuntary absenteeism and academic performance in secondary schools in the Alebtong district. Heavy rainfall and flooding, teacher strikes, and natural disasters were perceived to have a lower impact.

Recommendation
Efforts should be made to address and mitigate student illnesses and chronic health conditions. This can include implementing health education programs, providing access to healthcare facilities, and creating a supportive environment for students with health challenges.

Measures should be taken to address challenges related to transportation and accessibility. This can involve improving school infrastructure, increasing access to public transportation, and implementing initiatives to support students who face geographical barriers to attending school.

List of Abbreviations
SPSS: Special Package for Social Sciences

Conflict of interest
No Conflict of interest

Author Biography
Dorcus Ejang is a student of a master's in educational planning and management at Team University.

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