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Research Article

The School Absenteeism among High School Students: Contributing Factors^{*}

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the direct and indirect relationship between student school absenteeism, personal factors (academic self-perception, attitudes towards teacher and school, goal valuation and motivation/self-regulation), family factors (parents' educational level and income), and academic achievement in structural equation model. Four hundred and twenty three high school students participated in the study. The findings revealed that student absenteeism was negatively related to academic self-perception, attitudes towards teacher and school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, and academic performance. Results also revealed that student absenteeism differed in respect to parents' educational level and income. Results from SEM analyses noticed that personal and family factors significantly predict previous and current student absenteeism. SEM analyses also revealed that previous student absenteeism significantly predict previous academic achievement. Finally, SEM analyses noticed that previous student absenteeism and previous academic achievement can predict current student absenteeism. Contribution and implications of these findings were discussed in detail.

Keywords

School absenteeism • Personal factors • Family factors • Academic achievement • Adolescence

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All students, yet for one reason or another, at one time or other time want miss to a day of school. The general tendency to engage in such unwillingness is referred to absenteeism. Student absenteeism is defined by [Teasley \(2004\)](#) as a period of time when a student does not attend school, has become major and continuous problem among high school students in many countries. Indeed, numerous studies conducted to answer a question that is why high school students miss classes. In this notion, [Teasley](#) have noted numerous risk factors that contribute to student absenteeism such as family health, low income, poor school climate, drug and alcohol use, transportation problems, and community attitudes towards education. [Pehlivan \(2006\)](#) found that the major reason given by students for non-attendance at lecture or school were bored at school, dislike of school and lessons, encouragement of friends, and lack of expectations about education. [Wilkins \(2008\)](#) has reported four themes, which play important role to motivate students to attend school such as school climate, academic environment, discipline, and relationships with teachers. [Ingul, Klöckner, Silverman, and Nordahl \(2012\)](#) found that school absenteeism associated with internalizing and externalizing behavior, family work and health, and school environment. In another study, [Henry \(2007\)](#) has noted that parents' education levels contribute to students' absenteeism. [Simons, Hwang, Fitzgerald, Kielb, and Lin \(2010\)](#) found that there are an association between absenteeism of student and unfavorable school setting conditions. In addition, some researches argued that students' attitude and motivation for learning was a key factor in student absenteeism ([Devadoss & Foltz, 1996](#); [Gump, 2006](#); [Gökyer, 2012](#); [Kottasz, 2005](#); [Marburger, 2001](#); [Paisey & Paisey, 2004](#)). For example, [Kottasz \(2005\)](#) found that student with low motivation are absent more than student with high motivation level. [Schwartz, Radcliffe, and Barakat \(2009\)](#) reported that absenteeism negatively related to future-oriented academic goals. [Watkins and Watkins \(1994\)](#) found that student absenteeism was predicted by academic failure, low school effort and previous grades. Another group authors argued that students' attitude towards teacher and school play important role in school absenteeism ([Adıgüzel & Karadaş, 2013](#); [Attwood & Croll, 2006](#); [Gökyer, 2012](#); [Pehlivan, 2006](#); [Veenstra, Lindenberg, Tinga, & Ormel, 2010](#); [Wilkins, 2008](#)). For example, [Adıgüzel and Karadaş \(2013\)](#) found that student with high level of absenteeism reported negative attitudes towards school. [Attwood and Croll \(2006\)](#) found that students' negative attitude to teachers is related to school absenteeism. As a result, school absenteeism has a complex nature that includes risk factors associated with personal, academic, family, school environment, and social variables.

Because of absenteeism has a complex nature, the consequences of high level school absenteeism can be detrimental for students. In the other words, the absenteeism among high school students can lead to more negative effect such as low academic performance and many social problems. In regarding relationship between student absenteeism and academic achievement, [Epstein and Sheldon \(2002\)](#) stated that student

with absenteeism miss opportunities to learn the material that enables them to succeed later in school and; fall behind their classmates in academic achievement. In this notion, previous studies has revealed that student absenteeism is related academic failure and academic performance (Adıgüzel & Karadaş, 2013; Altinkurt, 2008; Gottfried, 2009; Klem & Connell, 2004; Korir, Charo, Ogichi, & Thinguri, 2014; McCluskey, Bynum, & Putchin, 2004; Moonie, Streling, Figgs, & Castro, 2008; Nichols, 2003; Morrissey, Hutchison, & Winsler, 2014; Yakovlev & Kinney, 2008). In addition some authors believed that level of academic achievement lead school absenteeism (Devadoss & Foltz 2001; Watkins & Watkins, 1994; Wayt, 1990). Student absenteeism is also associated with social problems. In this notion, Smink and Reimer (2005) stated that student with absenteeism often engage in high-risk behaviors that lead to referral to the juvenile justice system. Indeed, research has revealed that student absenteeism is related to juvenile delinquency (McCray, 2006; McCluskey et al., 2004; Smink & Reimer, 2005). Previous studies noticed that there is strong relationship between student absenteeism and school dropout (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000; Alexander et al., 2001 as cited in Tanner-Smith & Wilson, 2013, p. 469). In conclusion, student absenteeism impacts not only students' educational progress but also affects their social development.

The Current Study

When examining the related literature, plenty of studies take place about the reasons and effects of student absenteeism in abroad. However, in our country, this issue is not taken into account enough. In addition, it is important note that the variables taken into consideration in this study were examined separately by previous studies. On the other hand, integrated examination of these factors in a single study may provide us the beneficial information about the nature of relationship among these variables. In consequence, the aim of this study is to examine relationship between personal factors (academic self-perception, attitudes towards teacher and school, motivation and goal valuation), family characteristics (parents' educational level and income), student absenteeism and academic achievement in structural equation model. Within personal factors, previous studies have found associations between student absenteeism, academic self-perception (Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams, & Dalicandro, 1998), motivation (Moore, Armstrong, & Pearson, 2008), attitudes towards teacher and school (Attwood & Croll, 2006; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008). In addition previous studies have also found that these personal factors were related with academic achievement (McCoach & Siegle, 2003). These studies reported students with negative academic self-perception, negative attitude towards teacher and school, and lower level of motivation had high rate of absenteeism. Thus, it is hypothesis that personal factors would be predictor of previous and current absenteeism, and academic achievement (H_1). Student absenteeism is also related with family factors. Previous studies found link between

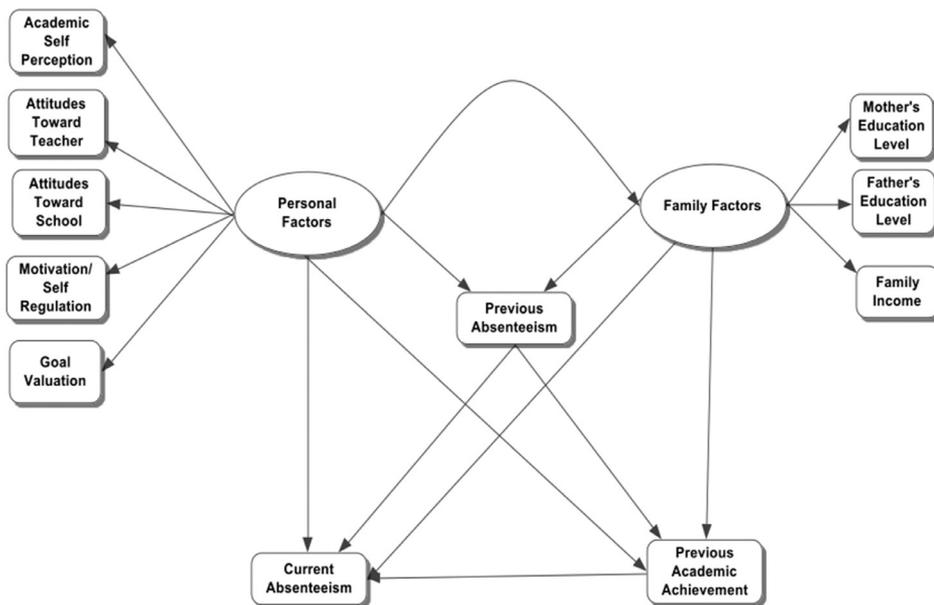


Figure 1. Theoretical model.

student absenteeism, academic achievement (Hortaçsu, 1995), parents' education level (Henry, 2007) and socioeconomic status family (Ingul et al., 2012). The common findings of these studies were students from low level SES and education of family had high rate of school absence and low level of academic achievement. It is hypothesis that family factors would be predictor of previous and current absenteeism, and academic achievement (H_2). Finally, the different views exist on the relationships between absenteeism and academic achievement. Some authors noted that students who attend school regularly have higher academic achievement than students with high absences (e.g. Klem & Connell, 2004). The other group authors believed that student with low level of academic achievement were more likely to have a higher rate of school absence (Devadoss & Foltz, 2001). It may be expected that there is a reciprocal relationship between academic achievement and student absenteeism. In other words, while student absenteeism may affect academic achievement, academic achievement may affect student absenteeism as well. Thus, it is hypothesis that previous absenteeism would predict previous academic achievement in turn previous academic achievement would predict current absenteeism (Figure 1).

Method

Participants

This study included a total of 423 high school students studying in grades 9–12 in two public schools in an urban city, Turkey. (58.4% of boys and 41.6% of girls). The

participants' age ranged from 15 to 18 years with a mean of 15.76 ($SD = 1.79$) for total samples. Students had same ethnic background, however their socioeconomic status was different. A paper-pencil survey, which includes data collection surveys described above was created, and applied students who were volunteer to participate in the study. All participants completed the survey approximately 25 minutes.

Instruments

Demographics information sheet and School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised Turkish Version were used to gather data.

Demographic Information Sheet. Demographic information sheet was prepared for this study includes personal information such as gender, age, parents' educational level, income, academic achievement, previous absenteeism and current absenteeism.

School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R). SAAS-R was used to determine students' personal factors. SAAS-R was developed by [McCoach and Siegle \(2003\)](#) to determine possible reason for underachievement students. SAAS-R consists five factors that are considered to be reason for underachievement students including academic self-perception, attitudes towards teachers, and attitudes towards school, goal valuation and motivation/self-regulation. SAAS-R consists of 35 items rated on a 7 point Likert scale. The internal consistency coefficient for each five factors in their sample ranged from .89 to .95 ([McCoach & Siegle, 2003](#)). [Balkis and Arslan \(2016\)](#) investigated psychometric characteristics of SAAS-R in Turkish sample. They reported that the SAAS-R Turkish Version consists 28 items with five factors. The internal consistency coefficient for each five factors ranged .75 to .91. Descriptive statistics and internal consistency coefficient with present sample are presented in Table 1.

Data Analyses

Data were analyzed using SPSS 15 program. For relationships between variations, Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized, and one-way ANOVA were also exerted to examine whether the dependent variable differentiated with respect to independent variables. The direct and indirect relations between all variables were tested using AMOS 7.0 with maximum likelihood parameter estimation. In order to evaluate the fit of the model, several model fit indices were used as suggested by [Kline \(2005\)](#). These were model's χ^2 (chi square), Root Mean Square of Error Approximations (RMSEA), and fit indices, comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), and normed fit index (NFI). The values of these fit indices greater than .95 indicate very good fits. Also, SRMR values $\leq .05$ and RMSEA values $\leq .08$, and a non-significant χ^2 ($p > .05$), and χ^2 ratio was below the suggested 2:1 ratio represent acceptable ([Kline, 2005](#)).

Results

In order to examine relationships between all variables, initially the correlation between all variables were examined by utilizing a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis. Results showed personal factors (academic self-perception, attitudes towards teacher and school, motivation and goal valuation), parents' educational level were statistically significant negative associated previous absenteeism (T1) and current absenteeism (T2). Results also noticed that academic achievement was negatively related to T1 and T2 absenteeism. Table 1 provides the detailed results of these correlation analyses and descriptive statistics.

Secondly, in order to examine whether level of student absenteeism differs or not in respect to parents' educational level and income level, an analysis of variance was performed. Results of ANOVA showed that student absenteeism differed in respect to parent's educational level. Students with low educational level of mother [$F(2, 341) = 3.681, p < .05$] for T1 absenteeism, [$F(2, 341) = 15.731, p < .001$] for T2 absenteeism and with low educational level of father [$F(2, 341) = 5.971, p < .01$] for T1 absenteeism, and [$F(2, 341) = 20.267, p < .001$] for T2 absenteeism have high rate of absenteeism more than students whose mother and father have high level of education. Results of ANOVA showed that T2 student absenteeism differed in respect to family income level. Students with high level income of family reported lower rate of absenteeism more than student with lower level income of family [$F(3, 340) = 2.526, p < .05$].

Table 1
Bivariate Correlations among Variables, Means, and Standard Deviations, and Range ($N = 344$)

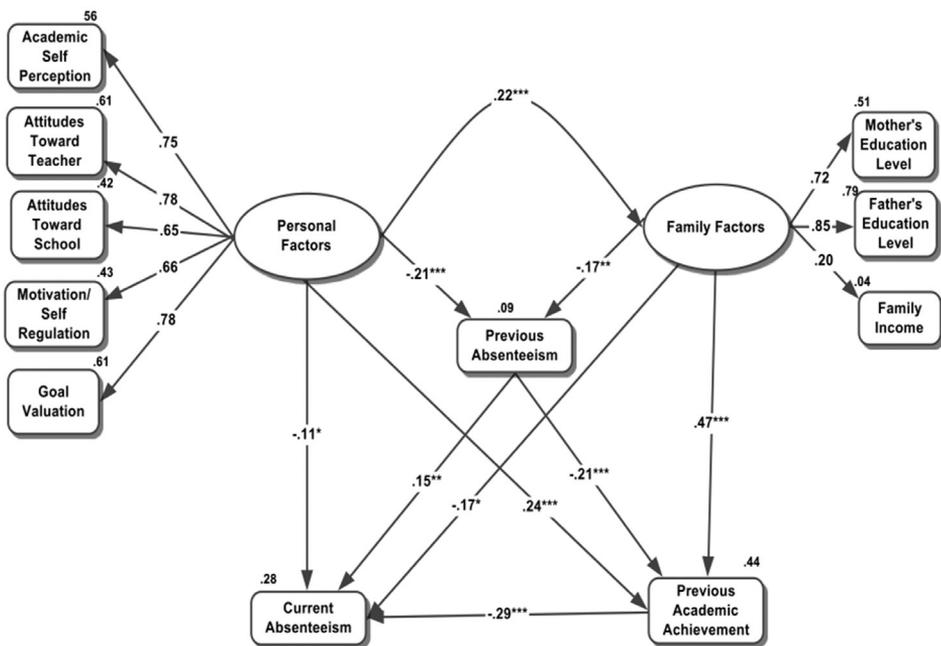
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.PSA	-	.317**	-.369**	-.173**	-.202**	-.221**	-.164**	-.156**
2.CSA		-	-.478**	-.253**	-.181**	-.220**	-.222**	-.218**
3.AA			-	.327**	.190**	.408**	.320**	.252**
4.ASC				-	.585**	.436**	.643**	.426**
5.ATT					-	.548**	.596**	.538**
6.ATS						-	.444**	.481**
7.GV							-	.509**
8.MTSRG								-
α				.75	.83	.91	.86	.91
M	5.98	.91	83.06	25.47	23.23	23.43	28.49	34.64
SD	4.22	1.47	14.32	6.04	6.65	8.86	7.45	11.54
Range	0-29	0-8.5	42-100	5-35	5-35	5-35	5-35	8-56

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Note. PSA = Previous Student Absenteeism, CSA= Current Student Absenteeism, AA= Academic Achievement, ASC= Academic Self Concept, ATT= Attitudes towards Teacher, ATS= Attitudes towards School, GV= Goal Valuation, MTSRG = Motivation/Self-Regulation

Finally, direct and indirect relationships between all variables were examined by utilizing Structural Equation Model (SEM) analyses. The results of SEM analyses indicated that the model was accepted as adequate: $X^2(35, N = 344) = 102.412$ and

$p < .001$. Furthermore, the X^2 ratio was below the suggested 2:1 ratio ($X^2/df = 2.926$). GFI = .95, RMSEA = .075 (.058-.092), SRMR = .044, CFI = .94, TLI = .91, IFI = 95, NFI = .92. The results showed that previous absenteeism was predicted by personal factors ($\beta = -.21, p < .001$), family factors ($\beta = -.17, p < .01$). Results also showed that T1 absenteeism predicted ($\beta = -.21, p < .001$) T1 academic achievement. Finally, results of SEM analyses noticed that T2 absenteeism was predicted by personal factors ($\beta = -.11, p < .05$), family factors ($\beta = -.17, p < .05$), T1 absenteeism ($\beta = .15, p < .01$), and T1 academic achievement ($\beta = -.29, p < .001$). Personal and family factors accounted for 9% of the variance in T1 absenteeism. Personal factors, family factors and T1 absenteeism together accounted for 44% of the variance in T1 academic achievement. Finally, personal factors, family factors, previous absenteeism, and T1 academic achievement together accounted for 28% of the variance T2 absenteeism (Figure 2).



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2. Direct and indirect relations between variables.

Discussion

This study attempted to establish the direct and indirect relationship between student school absenteeism, personal factors (academic self- perception, attitudes towards teacher and school, goal valuation and motivation/self-regulation), family factors (parents' educational level and income), and academic achievement in structural equation model. The findings revealed that student absenteeism was

negatively related academic self-perception, attitudes towards teacher and school, goal valuation, motivation/ self-regulation, and academic performance. Results also revealed that student absenteeism differed in respect to parents' educational level and income. Results from SEM analyses noticed that personal and family factors significantly predict previous (T1) and current (T2) student absenteeism. SEM analyses also revealed that T1 student absenteeism significantly predict T1 academic achievement. Finally, SEM analyses noticed that T1 student absenteeism and T1 academic achievement can predict T2 student absenteeism.

Personal Factors and Student Absenteeism

The results from correlation and SEM analyses confirmed the expectations, which assumed that personal factors would be predictor of previous and current absenteeism and academic achievement. The findings of this study revealed that student absenteeism is negatively related to personal factors such as academic self- perception, attitudes towards teacher and school, goal valuation and motivation/self-regulation. Personal factors are positively related with academic achievement.. All personal factors predicted student absenteeism and academic achievement. Firstly, the findings of this study showed that student absenteeism negatively related to academic self-perception. This finding confirms previous studies are indicating that students with high rate of absence have negative view about their academic ability ([Corville-Smith et al., 1998](#); [Reid, 1982](#); [Southworth, 1992](#)). This finding suggests that students with negative academic self-perception are more likely to absent. Secondly, the findings of this study noticed that student absenteeism negatively associated to motivation/ self-regulation. This finding supports the notion that student absenteeism is also a motivation relation issue ([Byer, 2000](#)). As noted previously, student with high level absenteeism tended to have lower level of motivation to engage in academic work ([Byer, 2000](#); [Devadoss, & Foltz, 1996](#); [Eaton, Brener, & Kann, 2008](#); [Kottasz, 2005](#); [Moore et al., 2008](#)). In the same way, [Swartz et al. \(2009\)](#) found that absenteeism negatively related future oriented academic goals. This finding suggests that student with high level absenteeism suffer from lack of motivation/self-regulation. Thirdly, the finding of this study revealed student absenteeism negatively related to attitudes towards teacher and school. This finding is consistent with other research indicating that absentees have negative attitude towards teacher and school ([Adıgüzel & Karadaş, 2013](#); [Attwood & Croll, 2006](#); [Valiente et al., 2008](#)). In the light of above findings, it can be concluded that students who have negative attitude toward teacher and school are more likely to absent. Finally, finding of this study showed that students who have not clear goals are more likely to absent.

Taken together, these findings suggest that students who have negative academic self-perception, negative attitude towards teacher and school, lack of motivation and

goal, have highest probability absences form school. Suldo, Shaffer, and Shaunessy, (2008) noted that students' beliefs about his/her own academic ability, attitudes towards teacher and school influences motivation to effort on academic tasks. Similarly Henry (2007) stated that negative beliefs of being successful in school negatively impact on motivation. Considering theoretical explanations and research findings, it can be concluded that students' negative beliefs about their academic ability, negative attitudes towards teacher and school may negatively impact on the motivation to attendance school.

Family Factors and Student Absenteeism

The results of current study confirmed also the second hypothesis, which assumed that family factors would be predictor of previous and current absenteeism, and academic achievement. The finding from the current study revealed that rate of student absenteeism differs in respect to parents' educational level and income. Family factors predicted student absenteeism and academic achievement. Students whose mothers and fathers received high school/college education reported lower rate of school absenteeism. Similarly Henry (2007) noted that students whose mother or father has college degree, had a lower chance of being absent from school. The finding of this study supports the link between school absenteeism and parents' education level as found by Öztekin, (2013), and Yıldız and Kula (2011), who suggest that low parents' education level has negative effects on school absenteeism. Additionally, the findings also noticed that students from families with lower socio-economic status (SES) are more likely to skip school. This finding supports the link between absenteeism and socio economic status as found by Rotham (2001), Ingul et al. (2012), Morrissey et al. (2013), who noted that having a higher percentage of students from low-SES families was associated with a higher school absence rate. The findings of this study suggest that parents' educational level and income play important role students' absenteeism levels and academic achievement. In other words, parents' educational level and income have a negative effect on students' school attendance.

Student Absenteeism and Academic Achievement

Finally, findings from current study supported the third hypothesis, which assumed that previous absenteeism would predict previous academic achievement in turn previous academic achievement would predict current absenteeism. The finding of this study showed that students' absenteeism is negatively related with academic achievement. The findings also showed that previous academic achievement predict current absenteeism. There are different views on the relationship between absenteeism and academic performance in the related literature. Some authors focused the impacts of students' absenteeism on academic performance (Klem &

Connell, 2004; Korir et al., 2014; McCluskey et al., 2004; Moonie et al., 2008; Nichols, 2003). These studies suggested that students who attend school regularly have higher academic achievement than students with high absences. This finding of this study is consistent with those studies indicating that absentees have low level of academic achievement. Another group authors focused academic performance as a reason for student absenteeism (Devadoss & Foltz, 2001; Watkins & Watkins, 1994; Wagt; 1990). These researches suggest that prior GPA predicts student absenteeism. The finding of current study is also consistent with the findings of studies are mentioned above. These finding suggest that previous school absenteeism negatively affect students' academic achievement. In turn, poor academic achievement affects negatively current school absenteeism.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study was designed to examine the relations between personal factors, family factors, previous and current absenteeism, and academic achievement. The findings of study noticed that students who have negative academic self-perception, negative attitudes towards teacher and school, lack of goal, and lack of motivation, are more likely to have school absenteeism. Findings also showed that students, whose parents have low educational level and low income, are more likely to have high level of school absenteeism. In other words, the lower educational levels of parents may evaluate as a risk factor for students' school absenteeism. Finally, findings noticed that students' academic achievement was affected by absenteeism, which in turn, predicted future school absenteeism.

In conclusion, the variables taken into consideration in this study were examined separately by previous studies. Correspondingly, it may prevent a clear picture of role of these variables in the student absenteeism. This study provides a clear picture about role of these variables in the student absenteeism by taking all variables in single study. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature suggesting that improving students' academic self-perception, attitudes towards teacher and school, motivation/self-regulation, and goal valuation contribute students' attendance and academic achievement. This study also provides some important findings for both psychological counselors and educators. Psychological counselors and educators can use finding of this study to develop intervention programs for helping students who suffer from school absenteeism.

Finally, the results of this study should be considered in light of its limitations. The findings and predictions are based on the SEM and correlational analyses, and should be interpreted accordingly. Another one limitation is related to this research design: It was cross-sectional. The qualitative research such as in-depth interviews or a case

study may be helpful in better understanding the role of the variable that is taken into consideration in this study, in student absenteeism.

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