

## Factors Influencing Teacher Absenteeism in Public Secondary Schools in Borabu Sub-County, Kenya

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### Abstract

*Job related absenteeism has the potential to rob poor countries of precious resources that include direct and indirect costs. Taxpayer's money is lost through paying absent workers and their substitutes. Available literature has also provided strong evidence that teacher absenteeism lowers student achievement. However, research conducted mainly in USA and Europe has produced conflicting results on causes and predictors of teacher absenteeism, but very little is known about teacher absenteeism in Kenya. This study therefore sought to examine the influence of selected personal characteristics (i.e. teachers' age, gender, marital status, and educational qualification) on teacher absenteeism in public secondary schools in Borabu Sub-County Kenya. To achieve this, the study adopted an ex-post facto research design. The study targeted a population of 245 teachers and 21 school principals in public secondary schools in Borabu Sub-County. A sample made up of 152 teachers was selected using stratified random sampling while purposive sampling was used in selecting 20 school principals for the study. Data was collected using researcher-developed questionnaires for both teachers and principals of the sampled schools. Expert advice was sought in determining the validity of the instrument through which some ambiguities were eliminated from the initial instrument. The questionnaires yielded reliability coefficients of 0.72 and 0.69 for teachers and principal's questionnaires respectively. Collected data was analysed using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22.0). Descriptive statistical analysis was done using frequencies, percentages and means while inferential statistical analysis was done using ANOVA and t-test at the .05 significance level. The study findings revealed that illness of teacher or close family member was the most common reason causing teacher absenteeism among others. Further it was revealed that most principals held the perception that female teachers had higher rate of absenteeism than their male counterparts although teachers' gender did not have a significant influence on teacher absenteeism;  $t(150) = .831$ ;  $p > .05$ . Regarding marital status, the study found out that principals had a perception that married teachers were likely to be absent than the single teachers. However, there was no statistically significant influence of marital status on teacher absenteeism;  $F(3,148) = .288$ ;  $p > .05$ . Based on these findings, the study recommends among others that the negative perception developed by principals about female teachers be eliminated through sensitisation workshops and seminars. Equally introduction of biometric attendance register would be ideal to curb absenteeism and that there is need to organize workshops and other seminars to give teachers skills on how to maintain balance in work and family duties.*

**Key Words:** Teachers, absenteeism, public secondary school.

## Introduction

Absenteeism has been a major human relations problem for business organizations and industry worldwide. This is because it places huge financial burdens on organizations and has a detrimental effect on their productivity and performance (Barmase & Shukla, 2013). Employee absenteeism is a worldwide phenomenon which due to the financial impact on a nation's economy is an important subject in the international agenda. Public schools are impacted as much by absenteeism primarily because of the effect on the delivery of quality education to learners. The problem of teacher absenteeism is a growing concern worldwide. It has broad-ranging consequences for governments, school boards, principals, teachers, students, and thus it tends to inhibit the realization of Education For All (EFA) and achievement of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A significant number of teachers are absent from their workstations on any particular working day worldwide. Teacher absenteeism is a chronic problem that cuts across national boundaries and it is a much bigger challenge in developing countries as compared to developed countries. The rate of teacher absenteeism in the U.S.A, England, Canada, Israel and in Ireland range from 3% to 6% (Bowers and McIver, 2000; Clotfelter, Ladd and Vigdor, 2007; Reddy, Prinsloo, Netshitangani, Moletsane, Juan & van Rensburg, 2010; The Auditor General, 2009). Recent studies have used more reliable approaches of measuring attendance through direct observation of teachers during surprise visits to schools (Chaudhary, Hammer, Kremer, Muralidharan & Rogers, 2006). By applying such robust methodology, researchers have revealed more reliable rates of absenteeism. In Papua New Guinea for example, the rate of absenteeism in primary schools was estimated at 15 percent (World Bank, 2004) and in Zambia at 18 percent (Das, Dercon, Habyarimanan & Krishnan, 2007). India suffers even more serious teacher absence problems with wide variations among her many states. Teacher absence rates ranged from a low of 15 percent in Maharashtra a more wealthy state, to a high of 38 percent in Bihar and 42 percent in Jharkhard which are relatively poor states (Chaudhary, et al. 2006). Another survey conducted by the World Bank revealed absenteeism rates for developing countries ranging from 11% in Peru, 21% in Indonesia, 27% in Uganda and 30% in Kenya (Abadzi, 2007). However, even within such countries absenteeism is disproportionately higher in poorer, more isolated schools, contributing to unequal educational opportunities.

To achieve Education For All (EFA) goals, few inputs are more essential than having a teacher present in the classroom. More importantly, high rates of teacher absenteeism often signal deeper problems of accountability and governance that are themselves barriers to educational progress. But in countries with such high absenteeism rates, administrative records may be poor guides to actual teacher attendance to the classroom. Education is a large enterprise and very costly. The financial cost of teacher absenteeism is therefore quite significant. (Bowers, 2001; Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007; Rosenblatt & Shirom, 2005). Such losses mirror the inefficient use of tax payer's money. Estimate indicate that some 10 to 24 percent of recurrent education expenditure worldwide is lost to teacher absenteeism annually (Chapman, 1994). For developing countries, the impact of teacher absenteeism is more damaging to the overall economy. This is because not only are the absenteeism rates much higher, but also because as much as 90% of educational recurrent expenditure is allocated to teachers' salaries (World Bank, 2010). Adeyemi and Akpotu, (2009), conducted a study to analyse the costs of un-authorized teacher absenteeism in Nigeria secondary school system between 1997- 1999. The study revealed that, the total cost of teacher absenteeism was US \$800.018. In Kenya for instance, a pilot study conducted between March and June 2012 in Taita-Taveta and Machakos Counties indicated that KES 62,016,000 of taxpayers' money is lost by the County government in Taita-Taveta annually and KES 161,280,000 from Machakos County every

year to teacher absenteeism (Toshiba Max Limited, 2012). Teacher absenteeism is therefore a real problem that substantially drains scarce financial resources in Kenya and consequently requires urgent intervention.

Teacher absenteeism is a costly problem not in terms of monetary terms alone, but also contributes to lowering students' achievement. It has been remarked that education has changed little in the past century. It still usually requires a teacher in front of a classroom full of students, meaning that the physical presence of both is required. In a developing country settings such as Kenya where substitute teachers are uncommon, absence of a teacher may have various consequences such as doubling up of classes, idle time for students and even student dropout if absence becomes frequent enough. Learning is not likely to be one of them. Research evidence worldwide indicates that teacher absenteeism translates to lower student achievements (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2007; Das, Dercon, Habyarimanan & Krishnan, 2007; Duflo & Hanna, 2005; Miller, Murnane & Willett, 2008; Mooij & Narayan 2010; Rodgers & Vegas, Uwezo East Africa 2013)). As such it is an agenda that requires the attention of all stakeholders in the society. Addressing the impact of teacher absenteeism requires information about the underlying causes and conditions that keep teachers from the classroom.

Studies conducted in developed countries on the issue of absenteeism have come up with conflicting evidence about the influence of personal characteristics on teacher absenteeism. For instance, studies that examined the influence of age on teacher absenteeism produced mixed findings. Scott and McClellan (1990) found that age was a significant factor in predicting absences of men and women during childbirth years. However, Rosenblatt and Shirom (2006) reported that teachers who were absent more frequently tended to be younger and less educated. The inclusion of other factors in their studies tended to confound their results. Studies indicate that absenteeism decreases with years of working experience (Barmby, Ercolani, & Treble, 2002). Interestingly, Porwoll (1980) found that novice teachers with two to four years of experience and veteran teachers who have worked for between twenty-three and thirty years presumably miss the least number of days. Pitts (2010) however found out that women, younger teachers, teachers with fewer years of experience, and teachers in speciality schools had the highest level of absenteeism. Pitts (2010) suggested that older teachers might have fewer absences because they can purchase service credit on retirement using unused sick days. Public school teachers in Kenya however, do not enjoy such facilities and since their pension is more or less based on their exit basic salary, they are likely to be absent more frequently on nearing retirement. Further, public school teachers in Kenya are poorly remunerated and are also held in low esteem in society compared to other professionals. Consequently, younger teachers are typically very mobile in search of better opportunities and thus are likely to be less committed to and more frequently absent from their teaching job than older teachers.

Alcázar, Rogers, Chaudhury, Hammer, Kremer, and Muralidharan, (2006) examined data from a national representative survey of public primary schools in Peru that indicated that there was no significant difference in rate of absenteeism by gender. Olanrewain and Ibiyem (2014) investigated gender, school climate and job satisfaction as correlates of absenteeism among selected secondary school teachers in Osun State in Nigeria. The study found that teacher absence significantly correlated with gender ( $r = .54$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The independent variable of gender made a significant contribution to the prediction of teacher absenteeism ( $\beta = -0.56$ ;  $t = 1.071$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Scott and McClellan (1990), in their study found that male teachers tend to miss fewer days than women by a ratio of 3.39 to 5.29 days per an academic year.

While it appears to be a generally accepted view that female teachers are absent more frequently than male teachers (Clotfelter et al., 2007; Kallio, 2006; Scott & McClellan, 1990), other studies have shown that this is not always the case. A study by Rosenblatt and Shirom (2005) found no association between absenteeism and gender. Moreover, analyses of data from a World Bank Survey of absence behaviour in teachers in Bangladesh, Ecuador, Indonesia and Uganda indicated that men were absent more frequently than women (Chaudhury, Hammer, Kremer, Muralidharan & Rogers, 2006). It is quite clear that researchers are not in agreement on the direction of the influence of gender on teacher absenteeism. Nonetheless, gender roles have changed little in Africa since the advent of formal education. Besides working as white collar employees, most women take up most household and childcare duties as well. However the extent to which gender of a teacher influences absenteeism is yet to be investigated from the Kenyan context. The proposed study sought to find out whether gender influences teachers' absences in public secondary schools in Kenya.

Marital status influences absenteeism and appears to do so by gender. Married men are absent less frequently than their single counterparts. However, married females are absent more frequently than their unmarried counterparts (Barmby, et al, 2002). According to Rosse and Miller (1984), the assumption that married women were absent more often because of caring responsibilities cannot be made. He showed that married women were absent more than single women for all age categories thus diminishing the likelihood of childcare as a causal factor behind greater absences of married women. He added that married women are often less dependent upon their jobs for economic support or as a career than men or single women and therefore they are more likely to stay away from work because of illness. It is likely that, marital status interacts with other related demographic variables such as age and gender to influence employee absence from work. Unlike their male counterparts, most women in Kenya take up most of the household duties than men, waking up very early to prepare their children for school, prepare breakfast for the family and do the cleaning. How these impacts on teacher absenteeism is yet to be known.

It is evident that personal characteristics of teachers influence absence from their workstations, and although mixed evidence exists, recent studies have revealed that age, gender, marital status and educational level influence teacher absenteeism differently depending on the context and culture of the study location (Barmby et al, 2002; Chaudhury, et al; Dionne & Dostie, 2007; Pitts, 2010; Rhodes & Steers, 1990; Scott & McClellan, 1990). Over the last decade, the Government of Kenya has made significant strides in education. The implementation of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in 2007 has led to an upsurge in student enrolment in both primary and secondary schools. Despite these gains, education in Kenya still faces a twin challenge of acute teacher shortage and high teacher absence rate that was reported to be at 11% which has compromised the quality of education (Uwezo East Africa, 2013; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2014). Government of Kenya has consequently noted the importance of optimum utilization of the teachers available at the school level. Efforts to optimise the utilization of the teaching staff are frequently hampered by high rates of absenteeism among teachers which is a waste of scarce resources and a threat to instructional quality. At a minimum, if there are differences in the teacher absenteeism rates in age, gender, marital status and educational qualification across teachers in Kenya, one can begin to ask why they exist and what can be learned about addressing the problem of teacher absenteeism. In view of these mixed findings, teachers' personal characteristics which included; gender and marital status were examined in order to determine their influence on teacher absenteeism in public secondary schools in Borabu Sub-County with the view of increasing the knowledge base about the predictors of teacher absenteeism in Kenya in order to fill this void.

## Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To analyze the influence of gender on teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Borabu sub-county, Kenya.
- ii. To assess the influence of marital status on teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Borabu sub-county, Kenya.

## Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance

Ho<sub>1</sub> There is no statistically significant influence of gender on teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Borabu sub-county, Kenya.

Ho<sub>2</sub> There is no statistically significant influence of marital status on teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Borabu sub-county, Kenya.

## Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Steers and Rhodes (1978) Process Model of Employee Attendance. This model has been lauded as the most influential in the study of absenteeism behaviour (Bruno et al., 2000). Steers and Rhodes (1978) studied the major influences that affect employee absences. Two important variables were applied to examine employee absence, motivation to attend and employee ability to attend work. They explained that these two variables interact such that a person's ability to attend moderates the motivation to attend. Motivation to attend, on the other hand, is influenced by employee's job satisfaction with his job situation and various pressures to attend. Steers and Rhodes (1978) model combines individual and organizational approaches. Hence, the multi-variant approach draws both from the personal and organizational domains. According to Rhodes and Steers (1978), the nature of the job and surrounding work environment interact with employees' values and expectations to determine employees' satisfaction with job situation. In this case, job situation refers to the degree to which an employee likes his or her job. In the model job satisfaction plays a crucial but indirect role as an influencing variable that moderates the effects of each determinant on other endogenous variables. The job situation is described in terms of job scope, job level, role stress, work group size, co-worker relations and opportunity for advancement. Employees' values and expectations are determined by personal characteristics such as age, gender, race, marital status, family size, working experience and education qualification which were critical variables in the study.

## Methodology

The research adopted an *ex-post-facto* research design. Teacher personal characteristics served as independent variables and teacher absenteeism was taken as the dependent variable. All these variables could not be directly manipulated because they had already occurred. The target population for this study was 245 secondary school teachers and 21 school principals deployed in 21 public secondary schools in Borabu sub-county (DEO Borabu, 2014). The sample size was calculated based on the formulas by Fisher, Laing, and Stoeckel, (1983). Simple random sampling was applied in selecting a sample of 20 schools from the 21 public secondary schools. On the other hand,

stratified random sampling was used to obtain the required sample size of teachers by gender for each selected school. With regard to the principals of the 20 schools who participated in the study, purposive sampling was adopted because it allowed the researcher to use cases that had the required information with respect to the objectives of the study.

The researcher used self-administered questionnaires to collect data. The teachers' questionnaire comprised of three sections that collected data on the independent and dependent variables. Section A collected data on demographic information that formed the independent variable including age, gender, marital status and educational qualifications while section B sought to collect self-reported absence data. It also sought the opinion of the respondents on the reasons why they believe teachers could absent themselves from school. The strength of the opinion was rated on a five point scale having the following assigned meaning: (1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=not sure, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree). Section C sought the opinion of the respondents on the remedies likely to reduce teacher absenteeism.

In order to ensure that all the items used in the questionnaire are consistent and valid, a reference check was made to the objectives of the study as well as relevant issues raised in the literature review to measure aspects of content validity. The research instrument was subjected to scrutiny and review by experts in the Faculty of Education of Laikipia University to give their view on content validity. Items found to be ambiguous were rephrased and modified to avoid ambiguity before being used for data collection. After pilot testing, the reliability coefficient for the teachers' questionnaire was .72 while that for the principals was 0.79. Hence the instruments were considered to be highly reliable. Quantitative data was analysed with the aid of the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22.0). This helped generate, tables and percentages that helped to make interpretation of data and making conclusions. Descriptive statistical analysis was done using percentages, frequencies and means. In addition, inferential statistical analysis was done using t-test, Chi-Square Test and ANOVA in testing the hypotheses at the .05 significance level.

## Results and Discussion

### Teachers' Rate of Absenteeism

The study sought to find from the teachers information about the number of days that they were absent from school in the past one week preceding the study and also the average number of teachers that were likely to be absent from school on a particular day. The study undertook the onus of getting teachers report about themselves regarding the issue of absenteeism. Table 1 shows a summary of the statistics as reported by the teachers and corroborated by the views of the principals as shown in table 2

**Table 1: Absenteeism as reported by teachers**

N=152	Min	Max	Mean	S. D
Days absent for the past one week	0	3	.63	.786
Average number of teachers that are likely to be absent in your school on a particular day	0	10	3.05	1.901

**Table 2: Absenteeism as reported by principals**

N=19	Min	Max	Mean	S. D
Total number of teachers in your school	6	45	14.05	8.216
Average number of teachers that are likely to be absent in your school on a particular day	1	5	2.68	1.108

From the table 1, it is clear that on average, each teacher was likely to be absent at least one day in a week from school (mean = .63 days). This means that the number of days each teacher loses due to absenteeism in a five weeks month could be about 5 days. Implying that a teacher is likely to lose an equivalent of one week of lessons covered in a single month. Furthermore considering that a term runs for about four months on average, it means then that about one month is wasted due to teacher absenteeism every term and about three months annually. This trend if not reversed implies that learners are likely to lose a lot in syllabus coverage and consequently it may have a negative impact on student achievement.

Moreover, it can also be seen from the table 1 that about three teachers are likely to be absent from school in a particular day. This finding is corroborated by the principals who reported that on average about three teachers were likely to be absent from school out of a possible average of 14 teachers in any school (table 2). This implies that the cumulative effect of teaching lessons not covered could be an equivalent of 15 days lessons in a month thus translating to an equivalent of about 45 days lessons in a term. This effectively means that students will not be learning most of their time in school due to absent teachers.

### Reasons for Absenteeism

The study sought to find out the reasons that could prompt teacher absenteeism in schools considering that the duty of a teacher is to teach in a school classroom situation. To address this, a number of possible reasons were put forward by the researcher of which respondents were to rate them on the basis of their level of agreement. Table 3 shows the opinion rating of reasons which could prompt teachers to be absent from school.

Table 1: Reasons for teacher absenteeism

	SDA	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	S. D
Illness of self or family member	6(3.9)	5(3.3)	6(3.9)	57(37.5)	78(51.3)	4.29	.981
Personal or family matters other than sickness	12(7.9)	21(13.8)	25(16.4)	64(42.1)	30(19.7)	3.52	1.185
Alcoholism and indulgence in other drug substances	36(23.7)	37(24.3)	18(11.8)	38(25)	23(15.1)	2.84	1.426
Out on official or school duty / functions	6(3.9)	5(3.3)	9(5.9)	61(40.1)	71(46.7)	4.22	.985
Transport difficulties	61(40.1)	43(28.3)	24(15.8)	19(12.5)	5(3.3)	2.11	1.163
Bad weather conditions	67(44.1)	53(34.9)	13(8.6)	18(11.8)	1(.7)	1.90	1.028
Bereavement / Funerals	3(2.0)	7(4.6)	3(2.0)	74(48.7)	65(42.8)	4.26	.865
Relaxed school policies on absenteeism	64(42.1)	41(27)	9(5.9)	22(14.5)	16(10.5)	2.24	1.400
Excessive workload	73(48)	48(31.6)	12(7.9)	14(9.2)	5(3.3)	1.88	1.103
Stressful working environment	48(31.6)	41(27)	18(11.8)	31(20.4)	14(9.2)	2.49	1.362
Seeking for additional income	36(23.7)	29(19.1)	25(16.4)	40(26.3)	22(14.5)	2.89	1.407
School leadership overlooks absenteeism	50(32.9)	45(29.6)	26(17.1)	24(15.8)	7(4.6)	2.30	1.212
School culture that tolerates absenteeism	72(47.4)	27(17.8)	16(10.5)	27(17.8)	10(6.6)	2.18	1.364
Pursuing further Studies	16(10.5)	17(11.2)	14(9.2)	66(43.4)	39(25.7)	3.63	1.270

From the table, it can be noticed that most (89%) of the teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that illness of self or that of a family member could be a reason why they could abscond duty while

about 7 percent disagreed strongly or simply disagreed that illness of self or member of the family could cause their absenteeism.

Similarly, majority (42%) of the teachers agreed that Personal or family matters other than sickness could be the reason as to why they could be absent while about 20 percent strongly agreed to the statement. About 21 percent however either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement and 16% were non-committal

Alcoholism and indulgence in other drug substances was not a major reason causing absenteeism as cited by majority (48%) of teachers who either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. About 40 percent others either agreed or strongly agreed with the view that alcoholism and indulgence to drugs could be the reason as to why they could be absent from school

As cited by about 87 percent of the teachers, being out on official school duties could explain the reason for their absenteeism. Only about 7 percent either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

As to whether transportation could lead them to be absent, majority (68%) of the teachers either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement while about 16 percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Further regarding weather conditions, about 17 percent of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that bad weather conditions were causing them to be absent from duty while about 12 percent agreed or strongly agreed that bad weather could be the reason for absenteeism

Regarding bereavement or funerals, majority (91%) of the teachers either strongly agreed or just agreed that it was a reason why they could be absent from school while about 7 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed to the statement

Further, a majority (69%) of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that they could be absent from school as a result of relaxed school policies on absenteeism. About 25 percent of them however agreed or strongly agreed that they could be absent from school as a result of the relaxed policies on absenteeism.

Similarly, excessive work load was not a reason that could make teachers to be absent from school as expressed by majority who either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. About 13 percent of them however agreed or strongly agreed that the excessive workload was a reason for being absent. Majority (58%) of the teachers also cited that stressful working environment could not be reason enough to make them absent from school while opinion was divided regarding the search for additional income as a reason for teachers absenteeism wherein about 41 percent strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement while 41 percent others strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Regarding school leadership overlooking absenteeism as the reason for being absent among teachers, majority (61%) of them disagreed with the statement. Similarly majority (65%) disagreed that school culture that tolerates absenteeism was the reason for being absent from school. Majority (79%) however agreed that pursuing further studies could be a reason for being absent from school.

Overall, the findings depict that the most common reason as to why teachers could be absent from school was illness of self or family member (mean = 4.29), followed by bereavement / funerals (mean = 4.26), official duties (mean = 4.22), further studies (mean = 3.62) and personal or family matters other than sickness (mean = 3.52) in that order.

### **Gender and Teacher Absenteeism**

This study also sought to find out the influence of gender on teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Borabu sub-county, Kenya. The study sought to find out the views of the principals

regarding how they rated male and female teachers on absenteeism as Low (L), Moderate (M) or High (H). Analysis of the finding is presented in table 4

**Table 4 Frequency of absenteeism by gender**

N=19	L	M	H	Mean	SD
Frequency of absenteeism for Male teachers	3(15.8)	15(78.9)	1(5.3)	1.89	.459
Frequency of absenteeism for Female teachers	2(10.5)	8(42.1)	9(47.4)	2.37	.684

It can be seen from the table 4 that about 16 percent of the principals were of the view that the frequency of absenteeism for male teachers was low while about 5 percent of them were of the view that the frequency of absenteeism among male teachers was high. Regarding the frequency of absenteeism among female teachers, about 47 percent of the principals were of the view that it was high against 11 percent who felt that it was low. Generally, most principals were of the view that the frequency of absenteeism among female teachers was high (mean = 2.37) compared to that of males (mean = 1.89). This finding seems to be in congruence with that of Unicomb *et al.* (1992) who found that gender plays an important part in determining the profile of teachers who are absent from their instructional environment. They discovered that female teachers tend to be absent more with the increase in age. Male teachers were out of school more days in their thirties than at any other time in their teaching careers. Although this study did not interrogate to find out the combined effect of age and gender on teacher absenteeism, there is a general view that the rates of absenteeism between male and female teachers were different from the principals' point of view. Other studies which seem to be in support of this finding include those done by Okurut (2012), who found that the propensity for teachers to be absent is much higher among females at 21.7 percent than in males at 8.3 percent because of the competing demands on women from household responsibilities. A similar study by Scott and McCallen (1990) found that male teachers tend to miss fewer days than women by a ratio of 3.39 to 5.29 days per an academic year.

From the teachers point of view however, the differences in absenteeism between male and female teachers were marginal as can be seen from table 5 where the absenteeism indices for both male and female teachers were 2.94 and 2.86 respectively

**Table 5: Absenteeism index for male and female teachers**

	Gender	N	Mean	S.D
Absenteeism Index	Male	94	2.9392	.55199
	Female	58	2.8621	.56257

In order to find out if these differences in opinion were statistically significant, a t-test was run at the .05 level of significance to test the first null hypothesis which claimed that:

**There is no statistically significant influence of gender on teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Borabu sub-county, Kenya.**

The hypothesis presumed that gender and teacher absenteeism were not related at least in a statistical sense. Analysis of this finding is presented in table 6

**Table 6: T-test for independence of means (gender and teacher absenteeism)**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	.031	.860	.831	150	.407
Equal variances not assumed			.827	119.080	.410

From table 6, it can be observed that the mean difference in the absenteeism index between male and female teachers was .77 which is not statistically significant ( $t(150) = .831; p > .05$ ). This implies that the levels of absenteeism between male and female teachers were similar and not gender sensitive hence disputing the principals' assertion which tended to disfavour female teachers as opposed to male teachers. Even though this study did not find gender to be statistically significant variable influencing teacher absenteeism, it should be noted that some studies done before have found contrary results from the current findings. For example Redmond (1978) found that gender was the only statistically significant correlate with females being absent more than males. Another study by Kallio (2006) investigated school climate factors as related to teacher absenteeism. The study used a survey to collect school climate data for each school in the district where the climate data was correlated with the dependent variable of teacher absenteeism. A multi-linear regression was used to analyse the data and it was reported that gender played a significant role on absenteeism in the study that was conducted on 280 full-time teachers. Barham and Begum (2005) however observed a similar rate of absenteeism for women with or without dependent children while it was commonly perceived that the presence of children is associated with a higher rate of absenteeism. Johns (2003) supported this conclusion by adding that compared to men, women with or without dependent children appeared to be more restless and busier during a scheduled day off. Consistent with this finding however is a study by Rosenblatt and Shirom (2006) in Israel public education system which found that there was no association between absenteeism and gender. Similarly, Alcazar et al., (2006) examined data from a national representative survey of public primary schools in Peru that indicated that there was no significant difference in absence rates by gender. This implies that the variable of gender produces mixed results in terms of predicting teacher absenteeism because of other confounding factors which could be culture specific.

### **Marital Status and Teacher Absenteeism**

The study also sought to establish the influence of marital status on teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Borabu sub-county, Kenya. In this regard, the number of days a teacher was absent from school were compared to the marital status of the teachers. Analysis of this parameter is as shown in table 7

**Table 7: Days absent for the past one week \* Marital status Cross-tabulation**

		Marital status				Total
		Never been married	Married	Divorced / Separated	Widowed	
<b>Days absent for the past one week</b>	0	7.9%	45.4%	0.7%	0.7%	<b>54.6%</b>
	1	5.3%	21.7%	0.7%	1.3%	<b>28.9%</b>
	2		14.5%		0.7%	<b>15.1%</b>
	3	0.7%	0.7%			<b>1.3%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>13.8%</b>	<b>82.2%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

It can be noticed that about 22 percent of the married teachers said that they were absent for one day as compared to those who have never married, divorced or widowed who cumulatively constituted about seven percent. About 15 percent of the same group said that they were absent from school for two days compared one percent of other groups in the same category. In general, about one third of the respondents said that for the past one week that preceded the study, they had been absent for at least one day. About 15 percent said they were absent for two days while one percent of the respondents were absent for three days.

From the principals' perspective, the rate of absenteeism for both married and single teachers was analyzed in order to corroborate the findings on table 7. Analysis of this parameter is presented in table 8

**Table 8: Frequency of absenteeism based on marital status from principles perspective**

N=19	L	M	H	Mean	SD
Frequency of absenteeism for Married teachers	1(5.3)	15(78.9)	3(15.8)	2.11	.459
Frequency of absenteeism for Single teachers	10(52.6)	4(21.1)	5(26.3)	1.74	.872

As can be seen in the table 8, about five percent of the principals were of the view that married teachers had lower rates of absenteeism while about 16 percent of them had a view that the frequency of absenteeism among married teachers was high. On the other hand, about 53 percent of the principal respondents were of the view that frequency of absenteeism among single teachers was low as compared to 26 percent who were of the view that it was high. This implies according to the principals that married teachers had a higher rate of absenteeism than the single teachers. The findings are in agreement with Pleck, Staines and Lang (1980) who reported that parents experience conflict between work and family more often than other workers who are not parents. Teachers who are parents of younger children experience more conflict than parents of older children do (Barham and Begum, 2005). Rhodes and Steers (1978), also concurred with this view and added that having more children at home increased work/family conflicts thus causing absence from work. Wambua (2015) in her study on factors influencing teacher absenteeism in Ruiru, Kenya found out that marital status and education level influenced teacher absenteeism. In a study by Barmby et al. (2002), it was found that married men are absent more frequently than their single counterparts. This is probably because of their commitment and obligations to home and family life. Barmby et al. (2006) explained that married women are expected to be absent more often since they are traditionally seen to incline more with taking care of children and household duties and nursing the sick. According to Rosse and Miller (1984), the assumption that married people were absent more often because of caring responsibilities cannot be made. Dionne and Dostie (2007) in their study on

determinants of absenteeism concluded that women were more likely than men to be absent, but being married reduced absenteeism. The implication of the above finding is that marital status is likely to influence teacher absenteeism.

In order to test this assertion, the second null hypothesis was formulated which stated that: **There is no statistically significant influence of marital status on teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Borabu sub-county, Kenya.** The hypothesis claimed that marital status of a teacher and absenteeism are statistically independent. To test the validity of this claim, a one way ANOVA was run at the .05 level of significance as shown in table 9

**Table 9: ANOVA on Marital status of teacher and absenteeism**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.271	3	.090	.288	.834
Within Groups	46.319	148	.313		
<b>Total</b>	<b>46.589</b>	<b>151</b>			

From the table, it can be observed that marital status did not have a statistically significant influence on teacher absenteeism  $F(3,148) = .288; p > .05$ . This implies that teacher absenteeism and marital status were statistically independent and hence the null hypothesis was accepted and conclusion made that marital status of a teacher does not statistically influence teacher absenteeism.

## Conclusions

Although opinion of principals was that majority of female teachers were always absent, it was found from the teachers themselves that the differences between male and female teacher absenteeism were marginal. This therefore means that gender of a teacher may not be a significant factor to be used in predicting ones levels of absenteeism. Therefore the blanket condemnation by principals concerning the female teachers and absenteeism levels should be dismissed and conclusion made that gender doesn't influence teacher absenteeism.

Similarly majority of the principals were of the view that the levels of absenteeism among the single teachers was low in their schools compared to that of the married teachers, suggesting an influence of marital status on levels of absenteeism among teachers, this study found that marital status of a teacher did not have a statistically significant influence on absenteeism levels among teachers. Thus it was concluded that marital status of a teacher does not necessarily influence levels of teacher absence.

## Recommendations

The study recommends that the negative perception developed by principals that female teachers had a tendency of being absent more than their male counterparts should be eliminated forthwith through concerted efforts by the TSC and the Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association to reverse this negative perception. Dissemination of this finding through conferences organized by the Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association (KESSHA) will be deemed ideal.

In view of the findings, the study recommends schools to institute policy changes like that of maintaining attendance roll for teachers wherein teachers log in and out every single day. Equally introduction of biometric attendance register will be ideal to curb absenteeism. A summary of

teacher attendance record should be posted on the staff noticeboards on a regular basis to reinforce the importance of this issue. It is also recommended that the Board of Management should consider awarding exemplary teacher attendance annually as well as enforcing existing sanctions fairly and consistently for the same reasons. Further, teacher attendance record should be used by TSC as one of the criteria during interviews for promotion. This would likely curb voluntary absenteeism by teachers.

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