

The Impact of DepEd School Policies on Absenteeism: A Comparative Analysis of Attendance Policies and Practices in Junior High School

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Abstract- Education is the foundation of national growth, with student attendance being an important predictor of academic performance. The Department of Education (DepEd) has established several measures to increase attendance rates, recognizing their relevance to individual academic accomplishment and overall socioeconomic growth. This study assesses the effectiveness of attendance policies in junior high schools, focusing on their implementation, obstacles, and influence on student absenteeism. The study uses a qualitative research design and includes structured interviews with seven junior high school teachers who have firsthand experience with the policies. The study found that tight enforcement, family participation, and incentive programs effectively reduce absenteeism. However, disciplinary tactics can potentially increase student stress and dropout rates, emphasizing the importance of supporting interventions. Socioeconomic considerations have impact on attendance patterns, with low-income students experiencing additional challenges. The study emphasizes the importance of a balanced approach in policy creation, combining supportive measures with enforcement to address underlying socioeconomic difficulties. Effective attendance tracking, positive reinforcement, and improved communication with parents are essential. The study's findings are intended to inform policy improvements, encouraging a more inclusive educational climate that promotes consistent student involvement and academic performance.

Indexed Terms- Socioeconomic, Parents, Challenges, Absenteeism, Educational Environment, Monitoring

I. INTRODUCTION

The bedrock of national growth is education, and the

success of education is dependent on student attendance. The Department of Education (DepEd) is in charge of developing and putting into effect policies meant to increase student attendance rates. These policies' effectiveness not only affects each student's academic achievement but also makes a substantial contribution to the socioeconomic development of the country. These policies also are crucial in how schools can fast-track and respond to such absences from students. DepEd's implementation of attendance regulations demonstrates its dedication to giving all Filipino students equitable access to high quality education. These policies cover a range of tactics and measures designed to deal with the various issues that prevent students from attending school regularly. Education authorities need to take a complex approach because of factors like socioeconomic position, geography, cultural norms, and infrastructure constraints.

Most educators agree that having attendance rules in place is crucial to creating a positive learning environment and encouraging student achievement. It grounds the institution of the possible scenarios that may occur during its implementation. According to research, teachers understand that classroom dynamics and academic attainment are significantly impacted by frequent attendance (Glewwe & Jacoby, 2016). Teachers often view attendance policies as a means to enhance student engagement and participation in classroom activities. Research suggests that teachers believe consistent attendance is essential for students to benefit fully from instructional content, interact with peers, and contribute to class discussions (Downing, 2014).

Teachers may run into difficulties putting attendance policies into practice even when they understand how important they are. According to Horn and Kisida (2017), common difficulties include dealing with chronic absenteeism, keeping track of attendance, ensuring policy compliance, and striking a balance between flexibility and accountability. Teachers recognize that contextual factors impact attendance patterns, including but not limited to student socioeconomic position, family dynamics, health concerns, and transportation barriers. Educators support a comprehensive strategy that takes into account each student's particular needs and circumstances when addressing attendance concerns (Skinner & Pontius, 2018).

Moreover, this research holds implications beyond the educational domain, highlighting the interconnectedness between attendance, educational attainment, and broader societal development. High attendance rates not only correlate with better academic performance but also foster social cohesion, mitigate dropout rates, and enhance future employability prospects, thus laying the groundwork for a more prosperous and equitable society.

Understanding the dynamics of attendance policies implemented by DepEd is essential for advancing the education agenda in the Philippines. By examining their efficacy and identifying areas for enhancement, this research seeks to contribute to ongoing efforts to ensure that every Filipino child has access to quality education and the opportunity to realize their full potential.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for evaluating attendance policies in junior high schools under the Department of Education (DepEd) encompasses several essential components and their interrelationships. Firstly, the framework focuses on assessing the implementation of attendance policies and practices and their consequent impact on student absenteeism rates. This evaluation aims to understand how attendance policies are put into practice and their effectiveness in addressing absenteeism.

Furthermore, the study seeks to gain insights into the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of DepEd attendance policies and their alignment with actual attendance outcomes. As noted by Smith (2015), teachers' perceptions of educational policies can significantly influence their implementation and outcomes. Understanding this alignment is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of policies.

Additionally, the framework identifies challenges associated with the implementation of DepEd attendance policies and explores how these challenges impact student absenteeism rates. According to Jones (2018), challenges in policy implementation can hinder desired outcomes. Hence, understanding these challenges is vital for improving policy effectiveness. The alignment between policies and actual attendance outcomes is considered pivotal, as suggested by previous research (Brown & Jones, 2019). This alignment influences student absenteeism rates and is an essential factor in evaluating policy effectiveness. Based on the findings from the evaluation of policy implementation, teacher perceptions, challenges, and policy alignment, the study will propose recommendations for improving attendance policies to better address absenteeism in junior high schools. This comprehensive framework integrates policy practices with outcomes, incorporates stakeholder perspectives, and aims to provide actionable recommendations for policy improvement.

PARADIGM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to evaluate attendance policies in junior high schools under the Department of Education (DepEd) to understand their implementation, effectiveness, and impact on student absenteeism rates. The narrative of the study's paradigm follows the Input-Process-Output (IPO) framework.

Input

- Implementation of Attendance Policies and Practices (IV1):
 - Attendance policies and practices data
 - DepEd guidelines on attendance
 - School attendance

records

· Teacher Perceptions of Policy Effectiveness (IV2):

➤ Surveys or interviews with teachers

➤ Questionnaires assessing teacher perceptions

· Challenges in Policy Implementation (IV3):

➤ Feedback from teachers and administrators

➤ Reports on challenges faced in policy implementation

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY Process

➤ Quantitative analysis of attendance data

➤ Qualitative analysis of teacher perceptions and challenges

➤ Correlation analysis

➤ Thematic analysis

Output

• Student

Absenteeism Rates (DV):

➤ Quantitative data on absenteeism rates

• Alignment of Policies with Actual Attendance Outcomes (MV):

➤ Analysis of alignment between policies and attendance outcomes

• Recommendations (Outcome):

➤ Proposed

recommendations for improving attendance policies

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the efficacy of DepEd's attendance regulations in Philippine schools. This study aims to shed light on these efforts' effects on student attendance patterns, academic performance, and overall educational outcomes by critically examining their conception, execution, and results. Improving educational results and influencing future policy decisions require an understanding of the

effects of these initiatives. The research can provide practical methods for decreasing junior high school absenteeism by examining attendance policies and practices. This entails looking at how policies are created, put into practice, and upheld to identify the strategies that significantly increase attendance rates.

This study is crucial as it may help stakeholders, educators, and policymakers understand the advantages and disadvantages of the current attendance regulations. It can aid in the improvement of tactics meant to maximize attendance rates and, as a result, enhance learning outcomes across the country by pointing out areas for development and best practices.

Junior high school is a critical transitional period for students, characterized by unique developmental, social, and academic challenges. By focusing on this specific educational context, the research can provide a nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to absenteeism and the effectiveness of policies tailored to the needs of junior high school students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore the following objectives:

1. Evaluate the implementation of attendance policies and practices in the absenteeism rates among the Junior High School Students.
2. Provide different perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of DepEd attendance policies and the alignment of the actual attendance outcomes.
3. Identify the challenges associated with the implementation of DepEd attendance policies in Junior High.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative research approach in a case study using structured interviews to investigate the impact of DepEd attendance policies on Junior High School absenteeism rates. Tenny, J. Brannan, and G. Brannan picked a qualitative design because it can provide more in-depth insights into a real-world situation (2022). In addition, Vickie Lambert and Clinton Lambert (2012) noted that the objective of the qualitative approach is to summarize specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals comprehensively. Hence, a qualitative approach is appropriate in this study, since it entails the

methodical collection of first-hand experiences and perceptions of Junior High School teachers who use these regulations in their classrooms, as outlined in DepEd Memorandum Number 014, series of 2021. Furthermore, the study will employ a personal interview with selected teachers to assess how successful these established policies are in junior high school and whether they are consistent with actual attendance outcomes.

LOCALE AND POPULATION

The study was conducted in a diverse and representative sample of Junior High Schools in Benguet, La Union and Mountain Province, specifically within La Trinidad, Mankayan, Mount Data and Pugo. These areas were chosen due to their varied demographic composition and the presence of a wide range of public junior high schools, offering a comprehensive overview and diverse perceptions of the implementation of the Department of Education's attendance policies and practices.

Seven participants were involved in this case study, representing different Public Junior High Schools: Pugo Central National High School, Madaymen National High School, Mankayan National High School, and Mount Data National High School. These participants have been actively implementing the Department of Education's policies and serve as class advisers, thus maintaining detailed records of student absences and their reasons.

The chosen locale and population ensure a well-rounded examination of the impact of DepEd school policies on absenteeism, encompassing various perspectives from educators who are directly involved in managing attendance and addressing absenteeism in their respective schools.

DATA GATHERING TOOLS

The primary data-gathering tool for this study is a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to capture various aspects of attendance policies and practices, including teachers' perceptions, experiences, and the perceived effectiveness of these policies in mitigating absenteeism. Additionally, the questionnaire incorporates open-ended questions to elicit qualitative insights into the teachers' perspectives, allowing for a comprehensive

understanding of their views and experiences.

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURES

The researchers prepared a letter of request to conduct the study in order to establish consent and rapport with the respondents and their respective workplaces. Purposive sampling was employed in this study, with the sampling units being subjectively selected by the researchers based on specific criteria. The respondents consisted of junior high school teachers who were directly involved in implementing the attendance policies under investigation.

Before the interview, respondents were oriented regarding the interview process and informed about the purpose of the study. Clarifications of specific terminology used in the interview were provided to ensure that respondents could answer the questionnaire with full knowledge of their responsibilities as important components of the study. The researchers requested that respondents answer honestly. The interview was conducted one respondent at a time, with each respondent being informed beforehand that they were not obligated to participate if they felt uncomfortable with any of the questions. After the data collection was completed, it was analyzed and interpreted for the study.

TREATMENT OF DATA

The collected data were systematically organized and analyzed using qualitative methods. Responses from the open-ended questions were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. This process involved coding the data to identify key themes and patterns related to the effectiveness of attendance policies, challenges faced by teachers, and suggestions for improving attendance practices. The thematic analysis provided a deep understanding of the teachers' experiences and insights into the impact of DepEd policies on absenteeism.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This study adheres closely to ethical guidelines for obtaining information. Initially, a letter of approval to conduct the interviews was sent to the school heads of the four participating schools. Upon receiving approval, the researchers conducted the interviews with the selected participants. During the interviews, a consent form was provided to all participants,

outlining their right to withdraw from the study or skip any questions that made them feel uncomfortable.

The research team introduced and clearly explained the purpose of the research interview, ensuring that all responses would be used solely for academic purposes. In accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all identifying information of the participants was kept anonymous or coded to protect their privacy. The data collected from the participants was treated with the utmost confidentiality.

All participants' responses were compiled and stored on a secure drive while the data was analyzed. Upon completion of the research, these recordings will be completely deleted from the drive, with no duplication retained by any of the researchers.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data reveal that the implementation of DepEd attendance policies and practices has varying effects on absenteeism rates among Junior High School students. Several participants highlighted strict enforcement of attendance, with consequences for unexcused absences, as a significant factor in reducing absenteeism. For instance, Participant A emphasized the requirement for parental involvement and the consequences of unexcused absences, which have collectively contributed to decreased absenteeism rates. This approach involves teachers contacting parents to inform them of their child's attendance, thereby fostering accountability and support from the family unit. Conversely, Participant B noted that stringent policies might increase student stress and anxiety, potentially leading to higher absenteeism rates. This perspective aligns with research suggesting that overly punitive measures can be counterproductive. Other participants mentioned that the policies have successfully minimized absenteeism, with one even claiming zero absenteeism rates in their context (Participant C). However, not all feedback was positive. Participant E argued that the policy has no impact, asserting that students remain indifferent despite parental interventions. This highlights a critical challenge in the application of these policies, suggesting the need for contextual adaptations to address varying student attitudes and circumstances effectively.

The perceptions of educators regarding the effectiveness of DepEd attendance policies are mixed. Participant A mentioned that while the policy can lead to frustration among students, it is crucial for maintaining attendance. Similarly, Participant C suggested strict enforcement could deter absenteeism, provided students understand the repercussions of their actions. Participant D suggested that the policy's effectiveness is contingent upon proper orientation of parents and students about the implications of absenteeism on academic performance. This aligns with the view of Participant F, who emphasized the importance of parental and community involvement in reinforcing attendance policies. Such engagement can foster a supportive environment conducive to regular attendance. However, some educators questioned the policy's efficacy. Participant E criticized the policy as ineffective, recommending more severe consequences for repeated absences. This perspective underscores a broader issue where the lack of perceived consequences diminishes the policy's deterrent effect.

The implementation of DepEd attendance policies in Junior High Schools faces several challenges. Participants identified fear of punishment, stress, and anxiety as unintended consequences that may exacerbate absenteeism rates (Participant A). These factors can discourage students from attending school, especially if they fear punitive measures for their absences. Participant B pointed out that the policies could lead to a higher number of dropouts, particularly among students who feel overwhelmed by the requirement to make up missed activities. This is a significant concern, as it suggests that while the policies aim to reduce absenteeism, they might inadvertently push some students out of the education system. Another challenge mentioned by Participant C is the difficulty in monitoring student attendance consistently. If educators fail to track attendance regularly, it becomes challenging to identify and address absenteeism issues promptly. This highlights the need for robust systems and support to ensure effective implementation of attendance policies. Furthermore, socio-economic factors play a crucial role in absenteeism rates. Participants noted that students from lower-income backgrounds often face barriers such as lack of access to transportation and financial instability, which can hinder their ability to attend school regularly (Participant E). Addressing

these socio-economic challenges requires a holistic approach that goes beyond attendance policies, incorporating support mechanisms to assist students facing such barriers.

Based on the results of the interviews conducted, it reveals a dual impact on absenteeism rates. The strict enforcement, parental involvement, and incentive programs like perfect attendance awards are effective in reducing absenteeism. However, it also shows that punishing approaches can increase stress levels of learners, and anxiety, and may even contribute to higher dropout rates. Regular attendance improves academic achievement and graduation rates, but too much focus on attendance without even addressing the underlying issues can decrease motivation too. Moreover, socioeconomic inequalities significantly influence attendance patterns. Students from lower income backgrounds encounter more obstacles to regular school attendance.

Teachers have differing perspectives on the success of DepEd's attendance policies in junior high schools. According to the data gathered, these measures can be effective provided that parents are kept informed of their child's absences. When parents are informed of their child's attendance history, they can take the appropriate steps to address and reduce absences.

Another key component for these rules and policies to be effective is student attendance tracking. It entails not just tracking attendance but also determining the legitimacy of absence reasons. Monitoring that is properly managed guarantees that students who are missing for genuine reasons are treated equitably, while those who are absent for unjustifiable ones are dealt with accordingly.

One step that DepEd had made to deal with the issue on absenteeism was giving rewards such as the award of "Regular Attendance" that creates a positive reinforcement which encourages students to attend school more often and take their studies more seriously. This strategy helped in foster an attendance culture in which students strive to be present and engaged in their studies.

However, there are underlying factors also where these DepEd efforts are put in lame and the policy

were not strictly implemented for teachers are also human who considers their learners. In such cases were- where low-income households who are mostly responsible for the high absence rates among junior high school students. Many families, particularly those in rural areas and urban slums, experience acute poverty, forcing children to balance scholastic ambitions with financial obligations. In these situations, the immediate requirement for financial survival sometimes outweighs the long-term benefits of education. As a result, students regularly drop out of school to work in the informal sector, such as selling goods on the street, aiding with family businesses, or doing housework, to supplement their family's meager income. The financial burden on low-income households extends beyond the need for additional funds from child labor. Even while public education is ostensibly free, there are some hidden costs associated with it. These include expenses for school supplies, uniforms, transportation, and daily meals. For many low-income families, these costs are substantial enough to hinder their children's regular attendance. When parents are faced with the choice between buying food or school supplies, basic survival often takes precedence, resulting in students missing school due to a lack of necessary resources. Healthcare costs also contribute to absenteeism among students from low-income families. Poor living conditions and limited access to healthcare services mean that children in these families are more susceptible to illnesses. When they do fall sick, the cost of medical care can be prohibitive, preventing timely treatment and leading to prolonged absences from school thus this situation has been always considered by the teachers leading to being lenient in imposing the policy.

In regards to imposing the policy problems may arise on imposing sanctions on absent students may cause anxiety or strain on a learner or strong punishments may encourage rebellious conduct in students, increasing absenteeism. Which can be address through having communication with the parents. However, the lack of collaboration from parents can lead to confusion about attendance policies and their value. Thus, without parental support, students are less likely to recognize the benefits of consistent attendance. Schools may struggle to engage parents who are distracted with their own financial or personal

concerns, resulting in a lack of reinforcement of attendance standards in the home. Finally, students with behavioral concerns can disrupt the classroom environment and reduce total school attendance. Unruly behavior might result in multiple suspensions or expulsions, which directly contributes to higher absenteeism rates. It was also noted that a lack of safety as a result of disruptive behavior may cause some students and parents to be unwilling to attend or send their children to school frequently thus, policies created by the Department are disregarded.

Addressing these difficulties necessitates a diverse strategy. Financial support programs, mental health services, increased parent-school communication, and effective behavioral management measures are required to reduce the impact of these difficulties on JHS absenteeism rates. Schools and policymakers must work together to provide a supportive and inclusive climate that promotes regular attendance and addresses the root causes of absence.

The DepEd attendance policies have the potential to reduce absenteeism rates, their effectiveness is heavily influenced by how they are implemented and perceived by students, parents, and educators. Strict enforcement and parental involvement are critical components that have shown success in some contexts. However, the punitive aspects of these policies can lead to unintended negative consequences, such as increased stress, anxiety, and dropout rates.

Educators' perceptions of the policies' effectiveness are varied, suggesting the need for more flexible and supportive approaches tailored to the specific needs of students and schools. Enhanced communication and collaboration between schools and parents, along with early intervention strategies and positive reinforcement, could mitigate some of the challenges identified.

Addressing the broader socio-economic factors that contribute to absenteeism is essential for the long-term success of attendance policies. Providing additional support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds and ensuring that attendance policies do not disproportionately penalize them is crucial for fostering an inclusive and supportive educational

environment.

The DepEd attendance policies are a step in the right direction, their implementation must be adaptive and considerate of the diverse challenges faced by students. A balanced approach that combines strict enforcement with supportive measures and addresses socio-economic barriers will likely yield the best outcomes in reducing absenteeism and enhancing overall student engagement and academic achievement.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings regarding DepEd attendance policies in Junior High Schools, several recommendations can help improve their effectiveness and address associated challenges. Firstly, improving communication among schools, parents, and students about attendance policies is crucial. Clear and consistent communication can encourage parental involvement and ensure students understand the importance of attendance, which could help reduce absenteeism.

Secondly, flexibility within these policies is key. Introducing more adaptable enforcement methods that consider different student circumstances can prevent unintended consequences like student stress or increased dropout rates. It's important to find a balance between enforcing attendance and understanding the individual challenges students may face.

Thirdly, implementing proactive strategies for early intervention and offering positive reinforcement for good attendance could create a supportive environment. By identifying and supporting students at risk of chronic absenteeism early on, schools can help them stay engaged and succeed academically.

Addressing socio-economic barriers is also critical. Providing extra resources and support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may face challenges like transportation issues or financial instability, can ensure attendance policies are equitable and effective for all. Furthermore, establishing reliable monitoring systems to track attendance and evaluate policy impact is essential. This allows schools to identify issues promptly and make necessary adjustments to improve policy outcomes.

Educator training is another key recommendation. Offering professional development opportunities that enhance teachers' skills in implementing attendance policies and engaging students effectively can foster a positive school environment.

Lastly, maintaining a research-driven approach is vital. Continually evaluating policy effectiveness and adapting strategies based on new insights and changing student needs ensures policies remain relevant and beneficial over time.

By implementing these recommendations, DepEd can enhance the effectiveness of its attendance policies, reduce absenteeism rates, and create a supportive educational environment that promotes student success across diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

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