
Factors Affecting the Absenteeism of Polytechnic Students in the Tourism and Hospitality Department

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Abstract

Student absenteeism harms their performance and prolongs the length of their studying. The aims of this study are to identify the influencing factors of absenteeism among Tourism and Hospitality students at Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah (PSIS). It is based on a sample of 289 students from all academic levels as follows: first level 61/170, second level 62/116, third level 34/143, fourth level 53/107, and fifth level 79/110. An online survey questionnaire was used to collect the data and it was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science and PLS-SEM. The result revealed that factors influencing absenteeism among the students indicated that assessment pressure, course content, and teaching issues were significant compared to the learning environment and social factors. It can be concluded that the lecturer's teaching style, lack of lecture material, lack of innovative teaching method and competency, and lack of understanding of the lecture content were among the common factors contributing to student absenteeism. Therefore, it is recommended to continue identifying the pattern of student attendance and plan effective approaches to reduce and increase their absenteeism. It is anticipated that the findings of this research will add to the body of knowledge and provide useful information to the PSIS and any higher education institutions.

Keywords : absenteeism; higher education; hospitality ; tourism

I. INTRODUCTION

Student absenteeism is becoming more common in educational institutions globally, affecting both the academic advancement of individual students and the overall quality of the educational experience. At Tourism and Hospitality Department, Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah (PSIS), the absence rate among students has escalated by 50% relative to the preceding semester. This increasing trend necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the reasons for absenteeism since addressing these issues is crucial for formulating effective methods to mitigate its impact. Elevated absenteeism can substantially impede students' learning processes, leading to inadequate academic performance and postponements in program completion. Furthermore, it impacts the management and instructional personnel by complicating administrative duties, such as managing repeat students, and imposes new responsibilities on educators who must modify their pedagogical approaches to address these difficulties [43].

Absenteeism is influenced by several linked elements that impact students' motivation and their

capacity to attend lessons regularly. This study will examine five principal factors influencing absenteeism: course content, teaching issue, assessment pressure, the learning environment factor, and the social factor [30]. Comprehending how these factors influence absenteeism is essential for tackling the root causes and formulating effective treatments.

This study seeks to identify the fundamental reasons for absenteeism within the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at PSIS by examining these characteristics. The results will offer significant insights to assist educators and administrators in making educated decisions to improve attendance rates and boost academic achievement. These insights will assist lecturers and management in pinpointing areas for enhancement, optimizing resource allocation, and enacting evidence-based policies that foster a more engaging and successful learning environment. This research will help in improving the quality of education in the Department of Tourism and Hospitality and analogous institutions by tackling absenteeism, a significant obstacle to student achievement.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research study analyses five key elements that affect absenteeism: assessment pressure, course content, the learning environment factors, social factors and teaching issues. Comprehending these reasons is essential, as absenteeism impacts individual students and has wider implications for educational institutions.

A. Assessment Pressure

Assessment must involve students and appear beneficial. Educators must also make use of student questions to clarify any misconceptions. Students who are marginalised among assessments should be allowed a re-assessment by educators. For theoretical assessment, students must be made aware of the material or matter they will compose. For practical assessment, students must be given guidance before the formal assessment is carried out. Poor performance in the first stage of preparation and poor participation must be followed up quickly to prevent students from becoming depressed and discouraged from continuing or disinterested [26]. Thus, it is suggested that:

H1: Assessment significantly and directly affects absenteeism among JPH students in PSIS.

B. Course Content

According to Wadesango and Machingambi [42], course content should be appropriate, accessible to students and explained briefly for all subjects. The course components that can affect student attendance are the absence of challenging subjects, poor presentation procedures by speakers, threatening learning conditions, excessive socialisation, low-maintenance work and poor relationships with educators. Thus, it is expected that:

H2: Course Content significantly and directly affect absenteeism among JPH students in PSIS.

C. The Learning Environment Factor

The learning environment refers to students' relationships with the educational centre (e.g., the use of language and rules that are easily accepted and understood), their academic needs (e.g., competent, professional, always encouraging and open educators) [4] and social (e.g., students' involvement with peers who are not successful, absent, commit crimes and bullies) [23], [33], [34]. It also involves positive classroom management, cooperation in extracurricular activities and tolerant disciplinary approaches [29]. When students feel acknowledged, accepted, respected and safe, it can balance their positive emotions towards the issue of absenteeism. Thus, it is expected that:

H3: The learning environment factor significantly and directly affects absenteeism among JPH students in PSIS.

D. Social Factor

Social factors are the most important factors that drive absenteeism. According to Faiza [14], parental lack of interest in school issues, family well-being or concerns related to money, drug and alcohol abuse, poor school atmosphere, transportation issues and various states of mind towards teaching may be among the reasons for absenteeism. Davis et al., [10] and Carlson et al., [6] stated that there is a correlation between chronic absenteeism and problems in the family. Children from single-parent families or those who experience conflict in their families may be more likely to skip school or be absent. Furthermore, family disputes may force students to take up part-time jobs to earn additional funds for their educational purposes. There is no doubt that employment can provide students with valuable skills and experience, however, it can also affect their engagement and academic performance due to excessive working hours, leading to increased absenteeism [3].

Meanwhile, Sander [37] further emphasises that personality traits such as mental health, intellectual development, nervous system disorders such as anxiety, depression, instability, attention disorders, temperament, cognitive processes, and individual talents are also closely related. These issues can significantly affect students' ability to attend classes, as they often result in medical leave and repeated absences. It makes it difficult for students to participate in class activities consistently and affects their overall educational experience and success. Thus, it is suggested that:

H4: Social factors significantly and directly affect absenteeism among JPH students in PSIS.

E. Teaching Issue

The relationship between attendance and the quality and style of teaching is difficult to measure objectively because each educator has different methods, styles, and personalities in delivering education. Several researchers [5], [11], [15], [16], [18], [28], [35] found that classes taught by likeable lecturers, lecturers who are helpful, and lecturers who provide interesting materials can influence student attendance. However, some researchers do not agree with this statement [12], [17], [32], [41]. They say that more students state that the content, course procedures, and assessment influence their attendance more. Attending lectures is easier than self-studying and makes knowledge more meaningful.

Clark et al., [8] reported that they want to get good grades, do not want to be criticised for not attending, have enthusiastic and knowledgeable lecturers who

facilitate learning, and view lectures as enjoyable social occasions. Therefore, the difficulty level of the course and assessment greatly influences student attendance [31]. Educators should review and reflect on their teaching approaches to make their lectures engaging and interactive to encourage higher attendance. Optimising the alignment between teaching practices and assessment can improve the perception of attendance among students [21]. It is therefore anticipated in this present study that:

H5: Teaching issues significantly and directly affect absenteeism among JPH students in PSIS.

F. Absenteeism

Absenteeism is a situation where the student is not present or available in the study area for whole day [1] without the good reasons [25]. It can be the voluntary or involuntary. The involuntary absenteeism may be related to the physical environment [7].

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive cross-sectional design was used to identify factors affecting the absenteeism of polytechnic students in the Department of Tourism and Hospitality. The study was conducted entirely at Polytechnic Sultan Idris Shah, Sabak Bernam, Selangor. It involved two programs, a Diploma in Halal Food Service Practice students and a Diploma in Tourism Management students, which admission sessions started from 2021 to 2024. It involved 289 out of 768 students starting from academic levels in Semester 1 to Semester 5.

A questionnaire developed by authors Abdelrahman and Abdelkader [1] and Thobakgale [39] was used to conduct this study. The researchers utilised and slightly modified the instruments to gather information for the investigation. It took around 10 minutes for the students to answer the questions. The survey was divided into two sections, the factors affecting the absenteeism of polytechnic students in the Department of Tourism and Hospitality understudies and the demographic (e.g., gender, age, programme and semester level). The first section consisted of 25 items grouped into five sections, which is teaching (5 items), course content (5 items), learning environment factor (5 items), assessment pressure (5 items) and social factor (5 items). All the instruments use a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". These are scored from 1 to 5, respectively. Data were collected between August and November 2024. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0 and PLS-SEM will be used to analyse the data.

IV. RESULT

Table 1 shows the study sample analysed descriptively. A total of 289 questionnaires were successfully collected. Most of the respondents are students aged between 18-20 years old which is 79.6 percent (n= 230), 21-23 years old which is 19.7 percent (n= 57), and the least were aged 24-26 and above 26 years old with 0.3 percent (n=1). This study involved 67.8 percent (n=196) of the respondents were female students, while the remaining 32.2 percent (n=93) of the respondents were male students. Results shows that most of respondents participated were among Diploma in Halal Food Service (DHF) students with 57.8 percent (n=167) while Diploma in Tourism Management (DUP) students is 42.2 percent (n=122). Besides, majority of the respondents were in semester 5 with 27.3 percent (n=79), semester 2 with 21.5 percent (n=62), Semester 1 with 21.1 percent (n=61) followed by semester 4 with 18.3 percent (n=53) and the least is from semester 3 with 11.8% (n=34).

Table 2 outlines the reliability and validity of a measurement model for six latent variables: Course Content (C), Teaching Issue (T), the Learning Environment Factor (LE), Assessment Pressure (A), Social Factor (S) and Absenteeism (ABS). Based on Table 2, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values were assessed to determine internal consistency reliability. All constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha values above the threshold of 0.7 with a range between 0.918 to 0.810, indicating strong internal consistency. The composite reliability (CR) of all constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.7 (values: 0.931-0.811), thus showing a meeting of the measurement model of reliability [31]. While the convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE). Various authors recommend a threshold of 0.5, and values within the range of 0.752 and 0.625 indicate that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance of each item [19].

Besides, all items with factor loadings above 0.70 aside from teaching technique (T1), which was evaluated at less than 0.7 indicate strong convergent validity. According to [20], loadings greater than 0.7 are acceptable since it show that the construct accounts for over 50% of the variation of the indicator, resulting in an acceptable item. However, loadings in the range of 0.6 to 0.7, may still be appropriate, particularly if the construct's composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) satisfy the suggested limits. Hair et al. [19] justified this approach by stating that loadings above 0.5 are acceptable if the overall construct dependability is sufficient, even though greater loadings are

preferred. Given that the composite reliability (0.910) and AVE (0.696) for the "Teaching Issue" construct are significantly higher than recommended, an indicator loading of 0.666 for item T1 is considered acceptable. Across all constructs, the measuring model has excellent reliability and convergent validity. These results demonstrate that the models may be reliably used in further structural model research, and that the model is well-specified. Additional analysis, such as discriminant validity and structural model evaluation, should be conducted following the PLS-SEM evaluation.

A reliable technique for evaluating discriminant validity in partial least squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Based on a predetermined threshold, the results in Table 2 are examined. Every concept pair exhibits satisfactory discriminant validity for the measurement model by meeting the HTMT < 0.90 standard [22]. All construct pairs have established discriminant validity, according to the HTMT study, with none above the suggested cut-off of 0.90.

Table 1 Respondents' Profile and Characteristics

	Demographic Respondent	Total (N)	Frequency (%)
Age	18 -20 years old	230	79.6
	21 - 23 years old	57	19.7
	24 - 26 years old	1	0.3
	Above 26 years old	1	0.3
Gender	Female	196	67.8
	Male	93	32.2
Program	Diploma in Tourism Management (DUP)	122	42.2
	Diploma in Halal Food Service (DHF)	167	57.8
Semester	1	61	21.1
	2	62	21.5
	3	34	11.8
	4	53	18.3
	5	79	27.3

Table 2 Goodness-of-Fit Measurement Model (n=289)

Latent Variable	Items	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Teaching Issue	T1	0.666	0.889	0.910	0.696
	T2	0.873			
	T3	0.837			
	T4	0.888			
	T5	0.888			
Course Content	C1	0.766	0.898	0.909	0.711
	C2	0.803			
	C3	0.871			
	C4	0.881			
	C5	0.888			
The Learning Environment Factor	LE1	0.824	0.893	0.894	0.699
	LE2	0.839			
	LE3	0.854			
	LE4	0.834			
	LE5	0.830			
Assessment Pressure	A1	0.862	0.918	0.931	0.752
	A2	0.824			
	A3	0.881			
	A4	0.900			
	A5	0.866			
Social Factor	S1	0.789	0.851	0.855	0.625
	S2	0.782			
	S3	0.824			
	S4	0.802			

	S5	0.755			
Absenteeism	ABS1	0.850	0.810	0.811	0.725
	ABS2	0.872			
	ABS3	0.833			

Table 3 Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

	A	ABS	C	LE	S	T
A						
ABS	0.884					
C	0.775	0.784				
LE	0.872	0.743	0.873			
S	0.720	0.741	0.699	0.764		
T	0.697	0.645	0.844	0.712	0.584	

Table 4 shows the multicollinearity between predictor components in partial least squares. Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is calculated using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). A strong correlation amongst predictor constructs is known as multicollinearity, and it can inflate the standard errors of regression coefficients and possibly affect the validity of the findings. Multicollinearity among the predictor constructs is not a significant problem because all of the VIF values are below the critical threshold of 5. The constructs "Course Content (C)" (VIF = 4.477) and "The Learning Environment Factor (LE)" (VIF = 4.561) are approaching the upper limit of the acceptable threshold (VIF < 5) (Hair et al., 2011). However, "Social Factor (S)" (VIF = 1.943) and "Teaching Issue (T)" (VIF = 2.902) have low VIF values but can provide a distinctive explanation for the dependent variable "Absenteeism (ABS)". The VIF analysis indicates that there are no significant issues with multicollinearity among the predictor constructs in the model. These findings show how effectively the dependent variable, absenteeism (ABS), is explained by the structural model.

Table 4 Variance Indicator Factor (VIF)

	VIF
A -> ABS	3.108
C -> ABS	4.477
LE -> ABS	4.561

S -> ABS	1.943
T -> ABS	2.902

Table 5 summarizes the findings of hypothesis testing with an emphasis on the relationship between the following variables: Assessment Pressure (A), Course Content (C), Social Factor (S), the Learning Environment Factor (LE), Teaching Issue (T) and Absenteeism (ABS). With p-values of <0.05 for H1, H2 and H5 resulted the impacts of Assessment Pressure (A), Course Content (C) and Teaching Issue (T) towards on Absenteeism (A). These constructs provided significant results. H1 shows a strong and statistically significant predictor of absenteeism. This suggests that increased assessment pressure contributes to higher absenteeism. Regarding H2, absenteeism is strongly influenced by the calibre or layout of the instructional course content, which probably means that students' attendance patterns are influenced by interesting or challenging course content. Furthermore, absenteeism is statistically significantly impacted by both effective and ineffective teaching strategies. This emphasises how important instructional strategies are in lowering absenteeism. The Learning Environment Factor (LE) and Social Factors (S) did not significantly affect Absenteeism (ABS), according to the insignificant results for H3 and H4 (p-values >0.05). The findings show that while the Learning Environment Factor (LE) and Social Factors (S) have no discernible effect on Absenteeism, Assessment Pressure (A), Course Content (C), and Teaching Issues (T) are important predictors of

absenteeism. By concentrating on enhancing instructional techniques, streamlining course content, and controlling assessment pressures, these findings offer insightful information for tackling absenteeism.

Table 5 Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	T statistics	P values	Decision
H1	A -> ABS	0.331	8.232	0.000	Significant
H2	C -> ABS	0.406	7.863	0.000	Significant
H3	LE -> ABS	-0.039	0.704	0.482	Insignificant
H4	S -> ABS	0.004	0.117	0.907	Insignificant
H5	T -> ABS	0.349	8.973	0.000	Significant

V. DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

The results of this study indicate that assessment pressure is the most influential factor contributing to student absenteeism. This finding aligns with the observations of Jones [24], who suggested that assessments and tests, despite their intended role in evaluating learning, may reduce student motivation and increase the likelihood of failure or early withdrawal from college. Similarly, Doyle et al., [13] reported that students often experience increased absenteeism when assignment deadlines are imminent. Additionally, Desalegn and Berhan [9] identified several reasons for missing

lectures, including preparation for other examinations, lack of interest, dissatisfaction with teaching methods, and inadequate lecture materials that do not sufficiently address assessment needs.

The second most significant factor associated with absenteeism is the teaching-related issue. It is consistent with the findings of [27], [36], and [40], who identified lecturers' teaching methods and instructional competence as critical determinants of student attendance. According to Rodriguez et al., [36] and Lopez-Bonilla and Lopez-Bonilla [27], there is a need for continuous professional development for educators, the promotion of innovative pedagogical approaches, and greater institutional recognition of effective teaching practices. Conversely, [40] highlighted that limited interaction between students and lecturers, insufficient mentoring opportunities, and a lack of accessible role models may also contribute to absenteeism.

Course content was identified as the third most significant factor influencing absenteeism. Some students expressed that insufficient explanation regarding the importance of attending all lecture hours and unclear course outlines contributed to their absences. These findings are in line with the work of [1] and [5], who identified factors such as mandatory attendance policies, the adequacy of lecture materials, the quality of interactions between students and lecturers, the complexity of the subject matter, and the availability of alternative learning resources as influential determinants of student attendance.

However, the study found that the learning environment and social factors did not have a significant relationship with absenteeism. This result suggests the need to revisit the items used to measure these dimensions or consider introducing additional variables to improve their representativeness. In this regard, future research could benefit from a more comprehensive examination of involuntary absenteeism, including absences caused by health issues, family emergencies, and other unavoidable circumstances. Accounting for these factors could provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of absenteeism. Additionally, expanding the scope to include variables such as student engagement, mental health, and participation in extracurricular activities may yield deeper insights. Exploring these aspects could help develop more targeted and effective strategies to address student absenteeism.

VI. LIMITATION

In research, the study is limited to a single institution which may restrict the ability to generalize the results to a broader population. The

present study only focuses on a single institution (PSIS), with the sample size of 289 students which may not fully capture the diversity of tourism and hospitality students in Malaysia or internationally. By expanding the sample to include students from multiple institutions could strengthen the generalizability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues examined.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study aims to expand the existing knowledge that influence student absenteeism. It was initially anticipated that all five key factors would have a significant and positive relationship with absenteeism. However, the findings reveal that assessment pressure, course content, and teaching practices are the most influential factors contributing to student absenteeism. These insights may assist PSIS and the broader higher education sector in developing effective strategies to address absenteeism and improve student attendance.

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