
The Level of Factors Influencing on Students' Absenteeism and Dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka.

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ABSTRACT

One major issue that Universities are currently facing and seeing little or no improvement with effectively dealing with student absenteeism and dropout. This study is investigated the level of factors influencing on student absenteeism and dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka. A Convenience sampling method is used to select participants for this study. A quantitative approach is used in this study. Accordingly, data are collected using a questionnaire, designed in a Likert's scale method. This study is limited to students who are in Eastern University, Sri Lanka. This research is investigated the level of factors influencing on students' absenteeism and dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka. In this study, five variables are used to measure the level of factor influencing on student absenteeism and dropout.

To attain the objectives, the quantitative method is used and data are collected through questionnaires. A total of 200 questionnaires are distributed to students who were in Eastern University, Sri Lanka for further analysis. The data are analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings exhibited that, financial related factors are highly influence on student absenteeism and dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka. Compare with other factors it is indicated that most of the students are absence to the lectures and dropout from the Eastern University, Sri Lanka because of financial problem.

Keywords: Absenteeism, Dropout, Faculty Related Factor, Family Socio Economic Status Factor, Financial Related Factor, Student Individual Factor.

1. Introduction

Eastern University, Sri Lanka is one of the Universities in Sri Lanka. It is located in Batticaloa District. It was started in 1981. It provides education services to large amount of students. At the same time, Eastern University, Sri Lanka faces a general problem of student absenteeism to lecture and dropout from the Degree Programme. In Sri Lankan context, these types of problems are not only faced by the Eastern university, Sri Lanka but also other universities are faced these types of problem. Absenteeism and dropout has become a general problem to universities (FEFC, 1997).

In an environment of stiff competition for jobs, graduates should possess high integrity and capabilities to win themselves a secured career. Unfortunately, negative attitude associated with truancy has become the most powerful predictor of delinquency and negligence among those students (DeKalb, 1999). As such, absenteeism is detrimental to students' achievement, promotion, graduation, self-esteem, and employment potential.

Marburger (2010) states that the difficulty inferring the effect of absenteeism on

performance because once a student is absent in a class, he or she may miss the opportunity of learning other techniques. Researcher found that missing in class progress the likelihood of missing examination material covered that day compared to the students who are present in the class.

Therefore, researcher feels that this problem is very serious. As such researcher take responsibility to find out the level of factors influencing on student absenteeism and dropout in Universities, Sri Lanka. This research based on Eastern University, Sri Lanka, because very few studies have been attempted to observe the level of factors influencing on student absenteeism and dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka.

1.2 Problem Statement

In this new era, more universities require to deal with the problem in producing qualified fresh graduate (Tahir, 2011). It is because of student absenteeism and dropout from the degree program is acknowledged problems in many universities. It is said that high level of absence will have a big impact on students' study performance in the long run.

Thus, in order to cope with this problem, possible variables that contribute to

absenteeism among students have to be figured out. Apart from that, there is a need to generate possible solution and try to resolve the existing problems. Because, every countries progress are depending on the future human capital. In this regard, the present study focuses on the level of factors influencing on student absenteeism and dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka for the purpose of improve the future human capital.

Because, Eastern University faces a big problem of student absenteeism and dropout from the degree programme. Statistical data clearly shows that 2% Arts and Culture, 18% Commerce and Management, 22% Science and 50% Agriculture students dropout from degree programme in Eastern university and also absenteeism become a big issue in Eastern University, Sri Lanka (Eastern University, Sri Lanka, 2016).

Several researchers identified the level of factors influencing on student absenteeism and dropout in university, but due to significant culture and educational system differences between Sri Lanka and other developed country in the west, the most study proposed in the western world may not suitable in Sri Lanka. Some researches

examining the causes of absenteeism and dropouts in other countries (Sahin, Arseven, & Kiliç, 2016). When the results of these studies were analyzed, it has been observed that the causes of absenteeism and dropouts are mostly originated from family, school and student.

In the Sri Lankan context, few empirical studies have been concerned the level of factors influencing on student absenteeism and dropout in university. Thus, it shows a clear empirical knowledge gap. So researcher examines this problem in this study and attempt to fill this knowledge gap.

Therefore, the research question of this study is:

“What is the Level of Factors Influencing on Student Absenteeism and Dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka”

2. Literature Review

Absenteeism affects the students' ability to get high scores in examination which can cause the decreasing of grades or the student may fail and will cause him or her to repeat the same year level. Students who have spent time attending lectures or classes have a significant, positive effect on students'

performance. Students that participated exhibits higher grades and scores in examinations that the student (Schmidt, 1983).

The term university dropout is commonly used to describe situations where a student leaves the university study in which he has enrolled before having obtained a formal degree. A student can dropout of his/her university study due to failure to meet the academic standards and demands within university in which case dropout should be viewed as involuntary. On the other hand, a student can decide to dropout of his/her university study for reasons more voluntary in character, for instance, in pursuit of another subject of study and/or another university, in which case the dropout is better described as a student transfer within the system of higher education (or alternatively, a student transfer to a lower educational level) (Johnes & McNabb, 2004).

In this study, student absenteeism and dropout acts as dependent variables which are affected by few independent variables such as student individual related factor, family socio economic related factor, institutional related factor, facility related factor, financial related factor.

2.1 Student Individual Related Factors

Student related factors are incidents within the students' control. For example, truancy is the decision of the child to stay from school without parental knowledge or consent (Lorraine & Ezenne, 2010). Illness is also a student factor since it is mainly the student who complains of being sick. Several students admitted to truancy. Academic achievement, Difference in expectations, Programme enrolled, Pressure from peers, Drug abuse are considered as a indicators of student individual related factors.

2.2 Family Socio Economic Status Related Factors

A student's family socio economic status, economic reasons and lack of parental guidance were also significant to influencing student absenteeism and dropouts. Based on the literature review, these results were also in line with those found by Mayer & Mitchell (1996), who defined family socio economic status as factors that encompass qualities of family composition, poverty levels, employment status and parental education backgrounds. Parents educational level, Family size, Family sustainable level of income, Family members occupation, support

from parents are considered as a indicators of family socio economic status related factors.

2.3 Institutional Related Factors

Universities are engines for economic growth committed to building a skilled workforce. They teach, conduct research to advance knowledge and promote creativity and innovation (Erero, 1996). University factor highly impact with student absenteeism and dropout. Student monitoring mechanisms, Extra-curricular activities, Recognition of degree, Lecturer's absenteeism are considered as indicators of institutional related factors.

2.4 Facilities Related Factors

Student attendance has long been linked to success in Universities. Therefore, it stands to reason that educational leaders and policy makers would be interested in the physical conditions that contribute to absenteeism. Many facility conditions other than indoor air quality have been found to influence student attendance. A study of 139 Milwaukee public schools showed that, when controlled for socioeconomic status, students' attendance and achievement were positively correlated to facility quality (Lewis et al., 2001). The increase in size of these campuses has been

connected with a decrease in student attendance rates (Raywid, 1996). Smaller schools have been found to foster instructional innovation that, in turn, engages students and provide motivation for class attendance (Irmsher, 1997). Academic support resources, Finances for support, Unavailability of textbook on time, No/limited access resources, Class hand-outs are considered as a indicators of facilities related factors.

2.5 Student Financial Related Factors

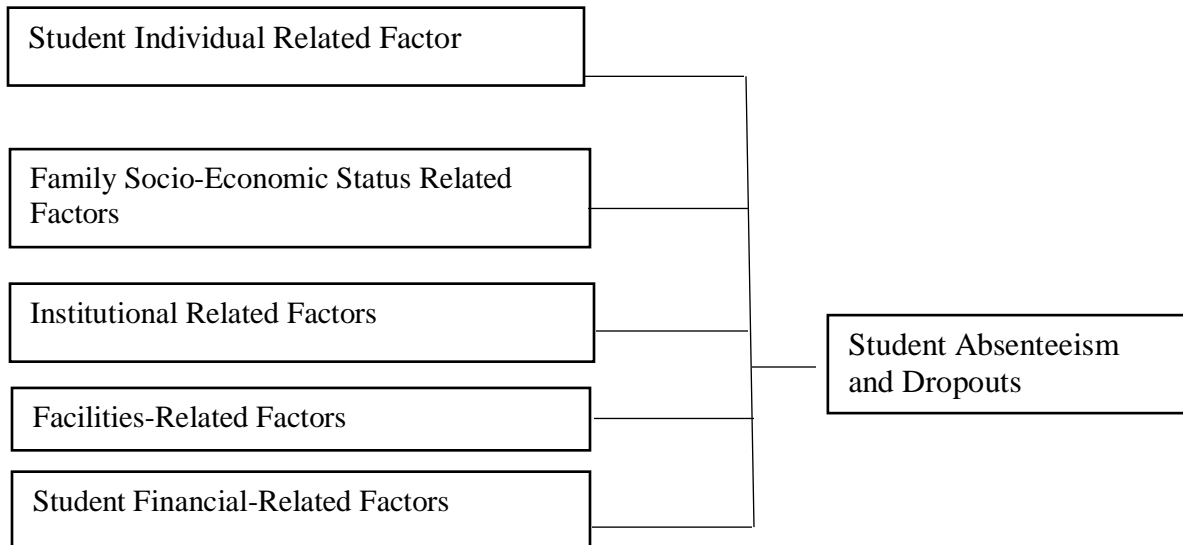
Financial related factors lead to create a dropout and absenteeism in higher education. According to MacGregor (2007) financial difficulties are largely blamed for dropout and absenteeism among students. Students are self-sponsored or sponsored by their employees. The study revealed that sponsorship had an effect on dropout. The following statements illustrate the student's viewpoints.

“Most of us are parents and would want to educate children. Priority is on paying fees for the children as such it becomes difficult to pay fees for oneself. The economic environment is not friendly at all. I wish the government would give us grants so that we

are able to pursue our studies. It's really difficult for us students".

Difficulty in getting a bursary/mahapola, Parents/guardians being unemployed, Having

3. Conceptual Frame work



(Source: Developed for Research Purpose)

4. Methodology

This study determines the extent to factors which are influencing the student absenteeism and dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka. Researcher expects to use influence of each factor as independent variable and absenteeism and dropout are the dependent variables of this study. For this research, researcher expects to use primary

a part-time job, Need to support the family are considered as a indicators of student financial related factors.

data collection method and the collected data is analyzed and interpreted using some statistical tools and techniques. Students who are absent to lectures and dropout from the degree programme in Eastern University, Sri Lanka are considered as a respondents of this study. The total population of this study was 3808 among them 200 was selected as sample by selected using convenience sampling technique.

Table 4.1 Sampling Distribution

Faculty	Absenteeism			Dropout		
	Population	Sample	%	Population	Sample	%
Faculty of Commerce & Management	935	49	29.70	219	12	34.29
Faculty of Agriculture	260	14	8.48	265	14	40.00
Faculty of Science	498	26	15.76	144	8	22.86
Faculty of Arts & Culture	1462	76	46.06	25	1	2.86
Total	3155	165	100	653	35	100

(Source: Survey Data)

5. Data Presentation and Analyses

5.1 Reliability Analysis of the Factors Influencing on Students' Absenteeism and Dropout

Factors	Cronbach's value	
	Dropouts	Absenteeism
Student individual related factors	0.857	0.942
Family socio-economic status related factors	0.861	0.925
Institutional related factors	0.839	0.927
Facilities-related factors	0.836	0.923
Student financial-related factors	0.898	0.940
Overall factors	0.884	0.944

(Source: Survey Data)

All attributes of the Students' Absenteeism and Dropout were tested for reliability analysis. The overall Cronbach's Alpha value for all attributes was 0.884 and 0.944 for dropout and absenteeism. A Cronbach's

Alpha coefficient of 0.7 and higher is adequate and signifies high reliability (Jermier and Berkes, 1979 and Sekaran, 2003).

5.2 Univariate Analysis

5.2.1 Univariate Analysis of Factors Influence on Students Absenteeism

Factors	Student individual related factors	Family socio-economic status related factors	Institutional related factors	Facilities-related factors	Student financial-related factors
Mean	3.45	3.68	3.69	3.71	3.73
Std.Deviation	0.75	0.76	0.82	0.83	0.84
Attributes	Moderate Level	High Level	High Level	High Level	High Level

(Source: Survey Data)

Student individual related factors are moderate level but family socio economic status related factors, institutional related factors, facilities related factors and financial related factors are high level among the

factors which are influencing on students' absenteeism in Eastern University, Sri Lanka. Further, student financial related factors are highly influencing on student absenteeism in Eastern University, Sri Lanka.

5.2.1 Univariate Analysis of Factors Influence on Students Dropouts

Factors	Student individual related factors	Family socio-economic status related factors	Institutional related factors	Facilities-related factors	Student financial-related factors
Mean	3.34	3.87	3.75	3.72	4.02
Std.Deviation	0.86	0.68	0.85	0.87	0.87
Attributes	Moderate Level	High Level	High Level	High Level	High Level

(Source: Survey Data)

Student individual related factors are moderate level but family socio economic status related factors, institutional related

factors, facilities related factors and financial related factors are high level among the factors which are influencing on students'

dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka. Further, student financial related factors are highly influencing on student dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The objective of this study is to find out the level of influence of each factor on student absenteeism and dropout in Eastern University, Sri Lanka.

For this objective 165 questionnaire were collected from students. Student individual related factor have expressed moderate level of influence on student absenteeism but, family socio economic status factor, institutional related factor, facility related factor and financial related factor have expressed high level of influence on student absenteeism in Eastern university, Sri Lanka. Approximately, most of the factors have expressed high level of influence on student absenteeism but financial related factor have higher level of influence on student absenteeism than other factors. So, most of the students are absent to the lecture because of financial problem.

Student individual related factor have expressed moderate level of influence on student dropout but, family socio economic status factor, institutional related factor, facility related factor and financial related factor have expressed high level of influence on student dropout. Approximately, most of the factors have expressed high level of influence on student dropout but Student financial related factor have higher level of influence on student dropout than other factors. So, most of the students are dropout from the university because of financial problem

6.1 Recommendation

Lecturers should identify their skills and try to enhance their skills through various training programmes and seminars. So it helps to change their orientation from the traditional lecture method to interactive and innovative lecture method. It is imperative that the lecturers try to respond to the problem of students' absenteeism by exploring creative techniques to increase class attendance. Lecturers should be well prepared for the lectures, arrest the attention of the students by presenting a good problem, the use of animation, audio, graphics, thereby stimulating learning and making the learners

to be curious and be motivated to learn the subject/skill. Parents' efforts are also vital to students' attendance to lectures. They should provide the financial, moral, social and emotional support essential for their wards' regular attendance at university. All the people in the society, the psychologists, educators, school guidance counselors, policy makers in the government, religious leaders etc should all come together to combat the problem of students' absenteeism from lectures by advising the students at various levels of education on the importance of attendance at lectures on their academic achievement and their future application skills.

6.3 Direction for Future Research

Researcher has suggested some areas for future research first, this research has designed cross sectional basis, and it means that data were collected from respondents at single point of time. Therefore, there is a bias about causal relationship between variables. Thus future research will be recommended to use longitudinal designs in order to avoid causal relationship biases in future. This research has mainly used self-report questionnaires to collect the data. So that responses may be affected by social

desirability response bias. So it is recommended for the future research in this area which will be used multiple sources such as quantitative or qualitative data like archival data from organizational records. This study only covered four faculties in Eastern University, Sri Lanka so in future scope will expand beyond the research area, it will be effective and useful.

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