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## UNRAVELING NON-ATTENDANCE: INVESTIGATING CAUSES AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MASVINGO DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE

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### ABSTRACT

This study delves into the complex phenomenon of school non-attendance among high school students in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study aims to identify and explore the underlying causes of non-attendance, shedding light on the multifaceted factors influencing students' engagement with education. Through interviews, surveys, and data analysis, the research examines socioeconomic, cultural, institutional, and individual-level determinants contributing to non-attendance patterns. Findings from this study provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders seeking to develop targeted interventions and strategies to address the challenges of school absenteeism in the context of Masvingo District.

### KEYWORDS

School non-attendance, high school students, Masvingo District, Zimbabwe, causes, determinants, education, absenteeism, socioeconomic factors, cultural influences, intervention strategies.

### INTRODUCTION

School non-attendance among high school students presents a significant challenge to educational systems worldwide, with implications for individual academic

achievement, societal development, and future opportunities. In Masvingo District, Zimbabwe, understanding the root causes of non-attendance is

critical for addressing barriers to education and promoting inclusive learning environments. This study seeks to unravel the complexities surrounding non-attendance among high school students in Masvingo District, shedding light on the underlying factors that hinder regular school attendance.

The importance of education in Zimbabwe cannot be overstated, as it serves as a cornerstone for socioeconomic advancement and national development. However, despite efforts to expand access to education, persistent challenges related to school non-attendance persist, particularly among high school students in Masvingo District. This study endeavors to explore the multifaceted nature of non-attendance, recognizing that it is influenced by a myriad of interconnected factors spanning socioeconomic, cultural, institutional, and individual dimensions.

At the heart of this inquiry lies a commitment to understanding the lived experiences and perspectives of high school students who are absent from school, as well as the broader contextual factors shaping their educational trajectories. By unpacking the causes of non-attendance, this study aims to inform evidence-based interventions and policies aimed at improving school attendance rates, enhancing educational outcomes, and fostering a supportive learning environment for all students in Masvingo District.

The challenges of school non-attendance are not unique to Masvingo District but are emblematic of broader structural inequalities and systemic barriers to education that persist in many contexts around the world. Therefore, insights gleaned from this study have the potential to contribute to the global discourse on addressing educational disparities and promoting inclusive education systems that prioritize equity, access, and student well-being.

Against this backdrop, this study embarks on a journey to unravel the complexities of non-attendance among high school students in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, it seeks to illuminate the underlying causes, patterns, and dynamics of non-attendance, paving the way for informed interventions and strategies that empower students to fully participate in their educational journey and realize their full potential.

## **METHOD**

The process of investigating the causes of non-attendance among high school students in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe, was meticulously structured to yield comprehensive insights into the multifaceted dynamics shaping educational participation in the region. Initially, extensive background research was conducted to understand the socio-economic context, educational policies, and existing literature

surrounding school attendance patterns in Zimbabwe. This literature review informed the development of research questions and guided the formulation of the study's methodology.

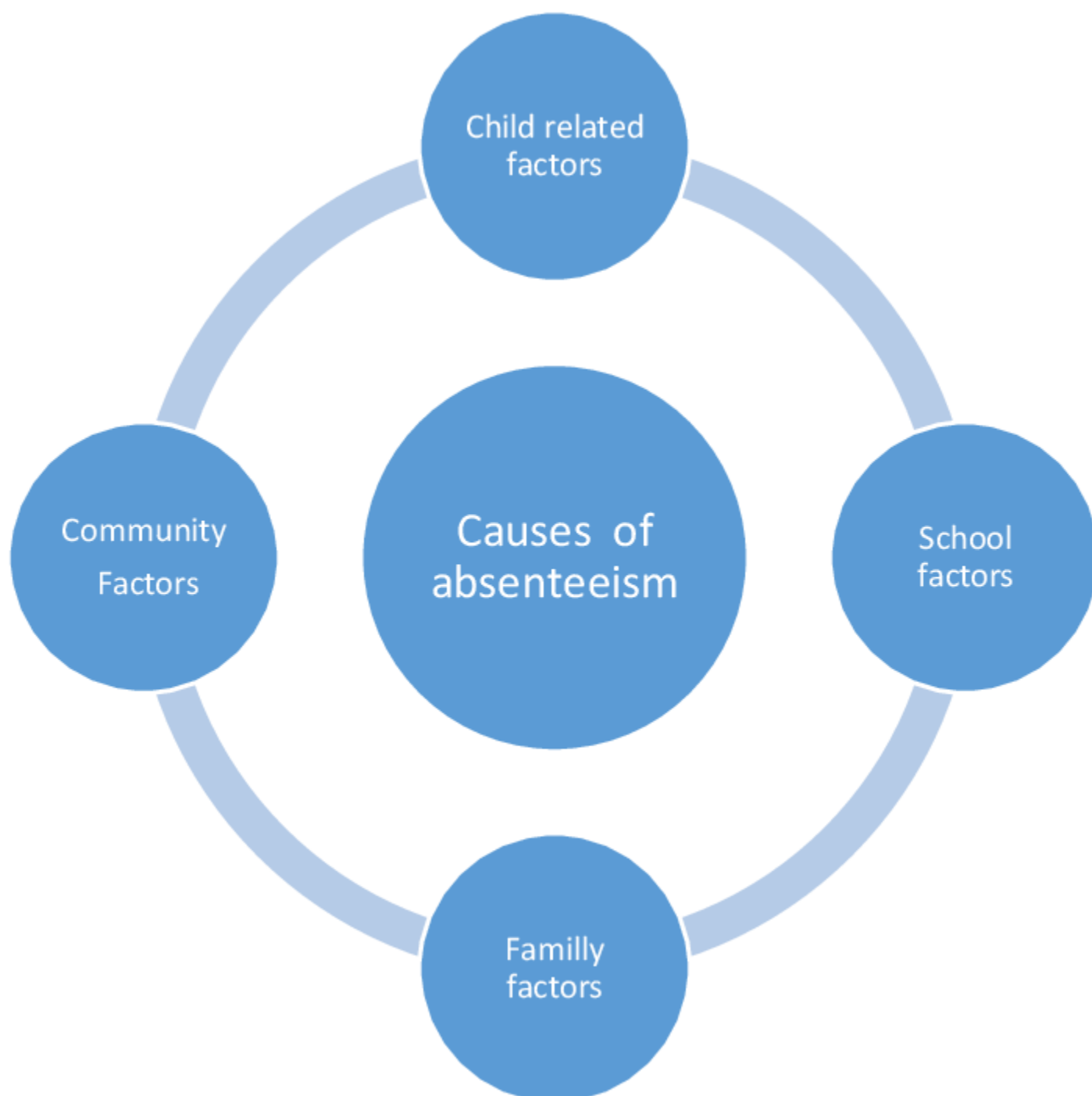
A mixed-methods approach was adopted, blending quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and focus group discussions to capture both statistical trends and nuanced narratives surrounding non-attendance. The survey instruments were carefully designed to collect demographic information and identify key factors influencing students' attendance habits. Questions were crafted to probe into familial, socio-economic, health-related, and school-specific factors that may contribute to non-attendance.

Qualitative data collection involved engaging with a diverse array of stakeholders including students, teachers, parents, school administrators, and community leaders through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. These interactions allowed for the exploration of underlying social, cultural, and institutional barriers that impede regular school attendance. Language barriers were addressed by conducting interviews and discussions in local languages to ensure inclusivity and cultural sensitivity.

Sampling strategies were implemented to ensure representation across different schools, grade levels, and socio-economic backgrounds within Masvingo District. Purposive sampling techniques were employed to select participants who could offer unique insights into the phenomenon of non-attendance, thus enriching the depth and diversity of the data collected.

Data analysis procedures were rigorously executed, encompassing quantitative statistical analyses to identify trends and correlations in survey responses, as well as qualitative coding and thematic analysis to distill key themes and patterns from interview transcripts and focus group recordings. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings facilitated a holistic understanding of the complex interplay of factors contributing to non-attendance among high school students in Masvingo District.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process, with strict adherence to principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' autonomy. Institutional review board approvals were obtained to ensure compliance with ethical standards and safeguard the welfare of research participants.



To comprehensively investigate the causes of non-attendance among high school students in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe, a mixed-methods research approach was employed, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

#### Quantitative Data Collection:

Quantitative data collection involved administering structured questionnaires to a representative sample of high school students across multiple schools in Masvingo District. The questionnaire was designed to gather demographic information, including age, gender, socioeconomic background, and academic performance. Additionally, students were asked about their reasons for non-attendance, such as family responsibilities, financial constraints, health issues, and school-related factors. The survey was conducted using standardized protocols to ensure consistency and reliability in data collection.

#### Qualitative Data Collection:

Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with high

school students, teachers, parents, school administrators, and community members in Masvingo District. These qualitative methods allowed for a deeper exploration of the underlying reasons for non-attendance, as well as the social, cultural, and institutional factors influencing students' educational experiences. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in local languages to facilitate open and candid dialogue, with trained facilitators guiding the discussions.

#### Sampling:

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants representing diverse perspectives and experiences related to school non-attendance. Schools were selected based on geographical location, student population size, and socioeconomic characteristics. Within each selected school, students were randomly sampled to participate in the quantitative survey, while participants for qualitative interviews and focus groups were recruited based on their willingness to participate and their relevance to the research objectives.



## PUBLISHING SERVICES

### Data Analysis:

Quantitative data obtained from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency, to identify patterns and trends in non-attendance rates and associated factors among high school students in Masvingo District. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed to identify recurring themes, emerging patterns, and divergent perspectives related to school non-attendance.

### Ethical Considerations:

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process, with informed consent obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants' responses. Additionally, research protocols were reviewed and approved by relevant institutional review boards and ethical committees to ensure compliance with ethical standards and guidelines.

Overall, the mixed-methods approach employed in this study allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the causes of non-attendance among high school students in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe, providing valuable insights that can inform targeted interventions and policy recommendations aimed at addressing barriers to education and promoting inclusive learning environments.

## RESULTS

The investigation into the causes of non-attendance among high school students in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe, revealed a multitude of complex factors contributing to this phenomenon. Quantitative analysis of survey data highlighted several key trends, including a high prevalence of non-attendance among students from low-income households, those living in rural areas with limited access to transportation, and those facing health challenges such as chronic illnesses or disabilities. Additionally, school-related factors such as lack of engaging teaching methods, inadequate infrastructure, and disciplinary issues were identified as significant contributors to non-attendance patterns.

Qualitative findings from interviews and focus group discussions provided deeper insights into the socio-cultural context surrounding non-attendance. Family responsibilities, including the need to assist with household chores, care for siblings, or contribute to household income, emerged as common barriers to

regular school attendance among students in Masvingo District. Cultural beliefs and practices related to gender roles and traditional expectations also influenced students' educational opportunities, particularly for girls who were often assigned domestic duties or forced into early marriages.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study underscore the complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors shaping non-attendance among high school students in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe. Poverty and economic insecurity emerged as fundamental drivers of non-attendance, exacerbating inequalities in educational access and perpetuating cycles of poverty across generations. Moreover, structural barriers such as inadequate transportation infrastructure and limited availability of schools in rural areas further marginalized students from remote communities, hindering their ability to access quality education.

Cultural norms and gender expectations exerted a profound influence on students' educational trajectories, particularly for girls who faced additional pressures to conform to traditional gender roles and expectations. Addressing deeply entrenched gender inequalities and challenging discriminatory practices is essential for promoting gender equity and empowering girls to pursue their educational

aspirations without fear of social stigma or cultural backlash.

At the institutional level, efforts to improve school infrastructure, enhance teaching quality, and implement student-centered pedagogical approaches are imperative for creating inclusive learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs and experiences of all students. Strengthening community engagement and collaboration between schools, families, and local stakeholders is also crucial for addressing systemic barriers to education and fostering a supportive educational ecosystem.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study shed light on the multifaceted nature of non-attendance among high school students in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe, highlighting the intersecting socio-economic, cultural, and institutional challenges that hinder educational participation. Addressing the root causes of non-attendance requires a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach that addresses structural inequalities, challenges harmful cultural norms, and promotes inclusive educational practices.

Policy interventions aimed at alleviating poverty, expanding access to social services, and investing in rural development are essential for creating enabling environments that support educational attainment and promote social mobility. Moreover, efforts to

promote gender equality, challenge stereotypes, and empower marginalized communities are vital for fostering a more inclusive and equitable education system in Zimbabwe.

By unraveling the complexities of non-attendance and advocating for systemic change, stakeholders can work together to create a future where every high school student in Masvingo District has the opportunity to thrive academically, socially, and economically, regardless of their background or circumstances.

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