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# Evaluating of the reasons for absenteeism in terms of different variables according to their own perceptions of pre-service teachers

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal the reasons of absenteeism in terms of different variables according to pre-service teachers. The research is a quantitative research which is designed on survey method. Population of the study consist of pre-service teachers who maintain education in the faculty of education at the universities in the 2008-2009 academic year and samples include 308 pre-service teachers who study at Faculty of Education at Rize University. ‘Scale of Absenteeism Reasons’ which has been developed by the researchers has been used as an instrument for collecting data. In the statistical transactions, independent-samples t test, frequency analysis and One Way Anova have been applied. At the end of the factor analysis, the scale has been reduced to 15 items and its reliability coefficient has been calculated to be as .815. At the end of the research, it has been determined that there is meaningful difference between the reasons of absenteeism and class and gender variables. There is no meaningful difference between the reasons of absenteeism and environment. Furthermore, it has been seen that the reasons of absenteeism have varied between the students who have higher success and who have lower success at school.

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*Keywords:* Absenteeism; reasons of absenteeism; pre-service teachers; success; academic success.

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## 1. Introduction

Education is the intentional behavior change process. In this process, the role of universities which produce information and train qualified persons for the society is great. Furthermore, we can't deny the contributions of the high school institutions to increase the living standards and welfare (Gediköglü, 2005). The role of the faculty of education which trains teachers who will educate next generations with their own knowledge and experiences is great in advancement and development of the societies. Pre-service teachers play an active role in becoming a society of knowledge by using their knowledge and skills. In this context, the education quality for the pre-service teachers is extremely important.

The need for qualified person has been increasing in our times and qualified human labor can only be achieved through qualified education (Aybek, 2007). Quality of education is one of the factors which affect the attendance status of the students to the courses. Attending the courses is a condition which effect success and appear due to internal reasons (Kirby and Mcelroy, 2003). Participation the courses feeds good habits, teaches the responsibilities

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and develops social skills (Stanca, 2006). On the other hand, absenteeism is an undesired behavior of student and occurs due to several reasons.

The absenteeism which is determined to have adverse effects on the students through the researches carried out is an element which affects academic success. Academic success refers to the all behavior changes in all fields of the programs which are other than the psychomotor and affective development of an individual (Erdoğan, 2006; Keskin and Sezgin 2009). Such behavior changes are displayed through the success achieved in the courses and the examinations the students take.

The university students spare most of their time in the classes for listening the lecture and they have to process their knowledge effectively in order to be successful. The students who become frequently absent in the courses for other activities receive lower performance in the exams when compared to the other students (Grabe, Christ and Douglas, 2004). High attendance in the courses is considerably associated with high marks (Dhalwal, 2003).

Policies of participation in the courses vary according to the high education institutions. However, it is widely accepted that participation in the courses is an important part of university education. (Stanca, 2006). In the courses which are attended at high levels, the aim is to realize students meaningful learning. What is meant by active participation in the courses at high level is, as its name suggests, planning and executing the lessons to provide cause high participations. The most effective way is to make the students active at the highest level during the process of learning and to make them responsible for their own learning. (Saban, 2002). One of the methods which allow the students to be more active in the courses is the in-class discussions. In-class discussions are the fundamental elements in learning the lectures of high education (Lin and Chen, 2006). It is possible to have a difference between the students who continue their courses regularly and the students who are frequently absent in terms of meaningful learning.

The basic aim of the research is to determine the reasons of absenteeism of the pre-serve teachers.

Sub-goals:

- 1) To determine whether there is meaningful difference for the reasons of absenteeism of the pre-service teachers according to their gender
- 2) To determine whether there is meaningful difference for the reasons of absenteeism of the pre-service teachers according to class levels
- 3) To determine whether there is meaningful difference for the reasons of absenteeism of the pre-service teachers according to the environment where they have grown up
- 4) To determine whether there is meaningful difference for the reasons of absenteeism of the pre-service teachers according to their success levels.

## 2. Method

This research is a survey method study. Survey method takes reflecting the existing the status identically as basis (Karasar, 2007). The situation is determined by identifying the reasons for the absenteeism. Population of the study consists of pre-service teachers who maintain education in the faculty of education at the universities during the academic year of 2008 – 2009 and sample is formed by 308 pre-service teachers who study at Faculty of Education at Rize University. Sample has been selected from certain population according to certain rules and is a small set whose qualification is acceptable or representing the population from which has been selected (Karasar, 1998). There are different methods in selecting the sample. One of these methods is random sampling method. According to this method, possibility computation is utilized in selecting the sample. The selection is fully made to be dependent on random and thus to represent the main mass at high level. (Seyidoğlu, 1993). This method has been employed for selecting the sample in order to make the results to be obtained from the sample to represent the population much better.

The scale which is the instrument for collecting data has been developed by the researchers. In preparing the scale, document analysis and interviewing methods have been utilized. Course attendance tables which have been obtained from lecturers of different courses at Faculty of Education, Rize University have been examined and the students who have been absent in the courses most frequently have been determined by using these lists. With fourteen students that determined have been interviewed along two weeks and the items of 'Scale of Absenteeism Reasons' have been formed. Necessary arrangements have been made on the scale on the advice of the experts and factor analysis technique has been used in order to determine structure validity after applying them on the pre-service teachers. Factor analysis is a statistical technique which aims explaining the measurement though least

number of items by merging variables which have the same nature or measure the same quality (Büyüköztürk, 2009). The scale which originally included 30 items have been reduced to 15 items through this method used for merging common items under the same factor and the scale has been determined to have four factors. Name of these factors are ‘Reasons Rooting from Negative Point of View’, ‘Reasons Rooting From the University Lecturer’, ‘Reasons Rooting From Internal Sources’ and ‘Reasons Rooting From Common Judgment and Missing’. In this scale which has been prepared as five likely type rating scale are the expressions of ‘Never Participate’, ‘Participate Rarely’, ‘Participate Moderately’, ‘Participate Mostly’ and Always Participate’. KMO value has been calculated as .847 as a result of the factor analysis. In order to determine whether there is meaningful difference for the absenteeism reasons according to gender, independent t test has been used. One Way Anova test has been used for class levels and environment variables. Cronbach Alpha has been calculated in order determine the scale’s reliability coefficient.

### 3. Results (Findings)

In order to determine the reasons of absenteeism which are most frequently expressed, percentage distribution of frequency is handled and the results have been indicated in Table-1.

Table 1. Distribution of The Reasons of Absenteeism According To The Situation In Which They Are Most Expressed

Items	f	%
I do not attend the courses because the idea that the no lecturers come to class in the first week	142	46
I do not attend the courses because I have difficulty waking up in the mornings	92	29.8
I do not attend the courses in order to resolve my family missing	76	24.6

The item ‘I do not attend the courses because the idea that the no lectures come to class in the first week’ is scored by 142 students; the item ‘I do not attend the courses because I have difficulty waking up in the mornings’ is scored by 92 students and the item ‘I do not attend the courses in order to resolve my family missing’ is scored by 76 students fully.

In order to determine whether there is difference between the gender and the reasons of absenteeism, independent samples t test has been applied and the findings have been indicated in Table-2.

Table 2. T-Test Findings About The Reasons of Absenteeism According to Gender

Items	Gender	N	X	sd	t	p
I do not attend the courses in order to resolve my family missing	Female	178	3.17	1.71	-3.84	.002
	Male	130	2.54	1.64		
Because I don’t have a book, I don’t attend the courses which require book	Female	178	1.39	0.86	2.73	.007
	Male	130	1.73	1.18		

At the end of independent samples t test analysis, it has seen that there is meaningful difference between the males and females in terms of the answers that given for the items ‘I do not attend the courses in order to resolve my family missing’ and ‘Because I don’t have a book, I don’t attend the courses which require book’. It can be said that females are more frequently absent in order to resolve their missing and the males are more frequently absent in the lessons which require books.

One Way Anova test has been applied in order to determine whether there is difference between the class levels and absenteeism reasons and the results have been indicated in Table-3.

Table 3. Anova Findings About The Reasons of Absenteeism According to Class Levels

Items	Class Level	N	X	sd	F	p	Source of Meaningful Difference
I do not attend the courses in order to resolve my family missing	1. Class	83	3.43	1.68	5.43	.001	1>3, 1>4
	2. Class	80	3.06	1.65			
	3. Class	74	2.68	1.74			
	4. Class	71	2.40	1.63			

At the end of the One Way Anova test, it has seen that there is meaningful difference in the item ‘I don’t attend the course in order to resolve my family missing’ in favor of 1<sup>st</sup> class. Based on this result, it can be deduced that the students who have recently started the university miss their families more and therefore they are frequently absent.

The findings of the One Way Anova have identified no meaningful difference between the absenteeism reasons and environment.

One Way Anova has been applied in order to determine whether there is meaningful difference between the absenteeism reasons and success levels and the findings have been indicated in Table – 4.

Table 4. Anova Findings About The Reasons of Absenteeism According to Academic Average

Items	Academic Average	N	x	s	F	p	Source of Meaningful Difference
I don't attend the courses because I am not motivated enough	Lower than 3.00	59	2.38	1.41	3.05	.048	3.50 and over >3.00-3.50
	3.00-3.50	154	2.46	1.41			
	3.50 and over	95	2.03	1.26			
I don't attend the courses which are delivered by strict lecturers	Lower than 3.00	59	2.67	1.54	4.52	.012	Lower than 3.00 >3.50 and over, 3.00-3.50 >3.50 and over
	3.00-3.50	154	2.53	1.52			
	3.50 and over	95	2.04	1.34			
Because I don't have a book, I don't attend the courses which require book	Lower than 3.00	59	1.71	1.16	4.79	.009	Lower than 3.00 >3.50 and over, 3.00-3.50 >3.50 and over
	3.00-3.50	154	1.62	1.10			
	3.50 and over	95	1.27	0.69			
Because I have the thought that I can not pass that course whatever I do, I don't attend the courses.	Lower than 3.00	59	1.59	1.20	4.94	.008	Lower than 3.00 >3.50 and over, 3.00-3.50 >3.50 and over
	3.00-3.50	154	1.52	0.99			
	3.50 and over	95	1.19	0.66			
Because I can understand the topics which taught in lessons from the notes taken down by my friends, I don't attend the courses	Lower than 3.00	59	2.67	1.43	5.73	.004	3.00-3.50 > 3.50 and over
	3.00-3.50	154	2.73	1.46			
	3.50 and over	95	2.13	1.25			

It has been observed that there is meaningful difference in 5 items. There is meaningful difference in favor of the individuals who have the average of points at 3.50 and over at the level for  $p=.048$  for the item 'I don't attend the courses because I am not motivated enough'; in favor of the individuals who have the average of points at lower than 3.00 and between 3.00 and 3.50 at the level for  $p=.012$  for the item 'I don't attend the courses which are delivered by strict lecturers'; in favor of the individuals who have the average of points lower than 3.00 and between 3.00 and 3.50 at the level for  $p=.009$  for the item 'Because I don't have a book, I don't attend the courses which require book'; in favor of the individuals who have the average of points lower than 3.00 and between 3.00 and 3.50 at the level for  $p=.008$  for the item 'Because I have the thought that I can not pass that course whatever I do; in favor of individuals who have the average of points at between 3.00 and 3.50 for  $p=.004$  for the item 'Because I can understand the topics which taught in lessons from the notes taken down by my friends, I don't attend the courses'. The findings revealed that the successful students do not attend the courses because they are not motivated enough and the students with lower academic average put forward lecturer and course materials as grounds for their absenteeism.

The scale's reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) was found as .815. This value is proper for research

#### 4. Discussion

As a result of the analyses carried out, it has been determined that the reasons of absenteeism have varied according to gender and class variables, that there is no meaningful difference between variable of environment and the reasons of absenteeism and that there is meaningful difference in 5 items between the average of points and the reasons of the absenteeism. The fundamental elements which cause the students not to attend the courses have been determined to be the ideas that no lecturers come to class in the first week, that they get up very difficult in the mornings and that they miss their families.

Galichon and Friedman (1985) rated the most important reasons which cause the students not to attend the courses as that the course is boring, that what is taught at the courses do not fulfill the expectations of the employers, that they don't like the lecture itself or the lecturer and that what is taught at the courses will not be useful in their career they are going to choose in the future at the end of their interviews with the students. Dhaliwal (2003) determined the reasons of the absenteeism of the students, from the most important to the least important, as the reasons rooting from illness, lecturer or the subject matter, familial reasons, individual studying, getting prepared for the examinations, rainy day, entertaining, relief because the previous examinations are good and failure in the previous examinations. Longhurst (1998) determined that the students do not attend the courses due to trip made by the university students (type and time of the trip to the university), weather conditions, illness, lectures and lecturers (attitudes towards education, lectures, subject matters and lecturers), university discipline, affect of peer groups, effect of family (death of a family member, patient visit, taking care of the siblings) and their domicile address. Among these factors, illness ranks the first with the percentage of 80%. Gump (2006) examined the rates of absenteeism on 172 university students according to gender and class variables. In this study, he revealed that 1<sup>st</sup> class students participate in the courses at the highest level, whereas 4<sup>th</sup> class students participate in the courses at the lowest level. Furthermore, he identified that the amount of absence period of the female students is less than that of male students. In the study made by Gump (2006) on 116 university students, it is seen that there is negative relation between the final marks and absenteeism. Furthermore, Marburger (2001) put forward that examination marks of the students are considerably affected by the absenteeism. Lin and Chen (2006) revealed that attending in the courses affect the examination performances positively with in their study carried out on 129 university students. Marburger (2001) indicated that the examination marks of the students are considerably affected by the absenteeism. Longhurst (1999) expressed that there is a very strong positive relationship between the attendance rates of the students and the examination results. Lin and Chen (2006) expressed that there are 2 types of students, one type of which is A type that attends the courses regularly and the other of which is type B that is less careful about attending the courses and A type students are more advantageous in terms of effective learning. Romer (1993) revealed that the rate of absenteeism is higher in big universities by making comparison among big, small and medium sized universities. Furthermore, the rate of absenteeism is lower in the courses which include more elements of mathematics. Kablan (2009) revealed that the students who do not believe in the importance of attending in the courses in order to be successful become absent more frequently as a result of which their levels of learning are lower in the study carried out on 95 pre-service teachers in the department of teaching mathematics.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

As a result of the frequency analysis, it has been determined that the students mostly express the items of ‘I do not attend the courses because the idea that the no lecturers come to class in the first week’, ‘I do not attend the courses because I have difficulty waking up in the mornings’ and ‘I do not attend the courses in order to resolve my family missing’ as the reasons of their absenteeism. When dealing with the issue whether there is difference between absenteeism reasons and their success levels, it has been seen that there is meaningful difference at the rate of  $p \leq 0.05$  on five items. It has been determined that the reasons of absenteeism are varied according to gender and class levels variables and that there is no meaningful difference between the reasons of absenteeism and environment variable.

Based on the findings obtained from the study, the following suggestions are made:

- The consciousness that the period of absenteeism is not a right entitled for the students but that they should attend the courses except for compulsory reasons should be given to the students.
- The lecturers should maintain lessons seriously during the first and last weeks in order to get rid of the idea that no lessons are executed during such times.
- The students should be motivated by using different learning methods and techniques.

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