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Influence of Chronic Truancy on Students' Learning Outcomes in Public Junior Schools in Nakuru West Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya

Nancy Cheptoo¹, Sr. Dr. Madeleine S. B. Achieng², and Dr. Elijah M. Ndung'u³

Corresponding Author email address: cheptoonancy76@gmail.com

¹ Master of Education Student Finalist in the Faculty of Education at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa

² Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa

³ Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Abstract

The study examined influence of chronic truancy on students' learning outcomes in public junior schools in Nakuru West sub-county, Nakuru county, Kenya. The study was guided by one research questions addressing how does chronic truancy influence learners' overall learning outcomes in public junior secondary schools in Nakuru West sub-county? The study was anchored on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) and adopted a convergent mixed-methods design, comprising a quantitative cross-sectional survey and a qualitative phenomenology design. The target population comprised 9,671 learners, 47 teachers, 20 Heads of Institutions, and one Sub-County Director of Education. A sample of 384 students was selected using proportionate stratified and systematic sampling techniques. All 47 teachers in the selected schools were targeted through census sampling, of whom 31 responded to the questionnaires, while six Heads of Institutions and one Sub-County Director of Education were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, focus group discussions, interviews, and document analysis. Validity and reliability of the quantitative instruments and trustworthiness of the qualitative data were established. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression in SPSS Version 26, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that chronic truancy ($\beta = -0.265$, $p < .001$) had a statistically significant negative influence on learners' learning outcomes by reducing classroom participation, curriculum exposure, academic achievement, and learner engagement. It concluded that persistent absenteeism creates learning gaps and limits students' development of essential competencies. The study recommends strengthening attendance monitoring, improving school-parent collaboration, and providing counseling, mentorship, and targeted learner-support interventions to reduce truancy and improve academic outcomes.

Key Terms: chronic truancy, chronic absenteeism, students, learning outcomes, public junior schools, Competency-Based Education

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Background to the Study

Education is a fundamental process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, and competencies necessary for personal development and societal progress. Within this study, truancy refers to deliberate and repeated absence from school without valid authorization, while chronic truancy describes persistent absenteeism involving missing a significant proportion of instructional time, commonly defined as being absent for 10% or more of the school calendar (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2022). Learning outcomes refer to measurable changes in learners' knowledge, skills, attitudes, academic achievement, and competency development resulting from educational experiences. Chronic truancy disrupts learners' exposure to classroom instruction, reduces participation, and negatively affects academic achievement, competency acquisition, and social development (Gottfried & Gee, 2021).

Various education stakeholders recognize regular school attendance as a critical factor in achieving quality and equitable education. UNESCO emphasizes that attendance is central to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive and quality education for all learners (UNESCO, 2023). The Ministry of Education identifies learner absenteeism as a major challenge affecting effective curriculum implementation and learning continuity, particularly within competency-based education systems (MoE, 2024). Schools, parents, communities, and policymakers have increasingly acknowledged that truancy is not merely an individual learner problem but a complex issue influenced by social, economic, institutional, and family factors. Effective responses therefore require collaboration among stakeholders through attendance monitoring, parental engagement, learner support programs, and targeted interventions.

Globally, chronic truancy remains a significant barrier to educational attainment, equity, and learner success. International evidence indicates that learners who frequently miss school experience reduced academic achievement, lower literacy and numeracy outcomes, and increased risks of school dropout (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2022). The United States Department of Education (2023) identifies chronic absenteeism as an early warning indicator of disengagement, behavioral challenges, and future social difficulties. Similarly, Gottfried and Gee (2021) argue that consistent attendance strengthens learners' motivation, classroom relationships, and cognitive engagement. UNESCO (2024) further highlights that irregular attendance contributes to global educational inequalities, particularly among vulnerable learners. These findings demonstrate that truancy is a multidimensional challenge requiring educational, social, and policy-based solutions.

In developed countries, research has demonstrated that truancy is influenced by interconnected school, family, and social factors. In Belgium, Keppens and Spruyt (2020) established that weak teacher–student relationships, unfavorable school environments, and inadequate guidance services contribute significantly to learner absenteeism. These findings suggest that school climate and institutional support systems influence learners' decisions to remain engaged with education. Similarly, Reid (2020) reported in the United Kingdom that students with high absenteeism levels were less likely to complete secondary education and were more vulnerable to social exclusion. The experiences of Belgium and the United Kingdom demonstrate that even well-established education systems continue to face attendance challenges,

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requiring early identification systems, supportive school environments, and coordinated interventions.

Evidence from other developed countries shows that successful attendance interventions can minimize the effects of truancy on learning outcomes. In Finland and Norway, lower levels of absenteeism have been associated with early identification mechanisms, inclusive learner support systems, and strong collaboration between schools and families (European Commission, 2022). In Australia, Hancock et al. (2020) found that even a single missed school day negatively affects literacy and numeracy performance, emphasizing the importance of consistent attendance. Similarly, Hattie (2022) noted that maintaining attendance above 90% is essential for achieving expected academic progress. New Zealand has also implemented initiatives such as *Attend to Achieve* to encourage regular attendance among learners. These examples demonstrate that developed education systems address truancy through preventive strategies rather than relying only on disciplinary measures.

Across African countries, chronic truancy remains a major challenge affecting educational quality and learner achievement. In South Africa, Mahlangu (2024) established that learners who missed more than 10% of school days recorded lower performance in mathematics and science compared with regular attendees. The study further indicated that economic pressures, particularly among learners from rural and township communities, contributed to absenteeism as some students engaged in informal work to support their families. Similarly, the Department of Basic Education (2023) identified persistent absenteeism as a significant predictor of school dropout, especially during transitions between primary and secondary education. In Nigeria, Aluko and Oyetunji (2023) found that truancy was more common among learners from low-income households due to child labor, household responsibilities, and economic hardship, demonstrating the strong relationship between socioeconomic conditions and school attendance.

Research from Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia further demonstrates the complex causes and consequences of chronic truancy within African education systems. Namukwaya (2022) found that learners in remote Ugandan communities experienced absenteeism due to long distances to schools, agricultural responsibilities, and unfavorable weather conditions, which negatively affected literacy and numeracy development. In Tanzania, Mwakusa (2022) reported that school feeding programs and conditional attendance incentives reduced absenteeism and improved learner participation. Similarly, Gebremariam (2023) established that chronic absenteeism in Ethiopia increased dropout risks, reduced learner motivation, and limited mastery of curriculum content. These findings suggest that truancy in African contexts is not only an educational challenge but also reflects broader social inequalities, poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited support systems that influence learners' ability to participate consistently in education.

In Kenya, education is recognized as a foundation for national development through frameworks such as Vision 2030 and the Basic Education Act (2013). The implementation of Competency-Based Education (CBE) emphasizes continuous assessment, active participation, and progressive competency development, making regular attendance essential for successful learning (MoE, 2023). However, despite initiatives such as Free Primary Education and Free Day Secondary Education, truancy continues to affect learner participation, particularly in public

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schools. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2023) reported that although school enrollment has improved, consistent attendance remains a challenge in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. Studies from Uasin Gishu and Kiambu counties indicate that irregular attendance is associated with reduced academic achievement, incomplete assignments, and lower learner engagement (Chebet & Mutai, 2022; Waweru, 2021).

Studies conducted across different Kenyan counties reveal that truancy is influenced by varying contextual factors. In Kisii County, Were (2022) established that learners with consistent attendance achieved better examination outcomes than those with frequent absenteeism. Similarly, Koech and Kiprop (2021) found that absenteeism was significantly associated with declining academic performance among learners. In arid and semi-arid counties such as Turkana and Garissa, Abdullahi (2022) identified nomadic lifestyles, insecurity, and household responsibilities as major contributors to absenteeism. In urban informal settlements such as Kibera and Mathare, Otieno and Mugo (2022) linked truancy to poverty, child labor, and family instability. These studies demonstrate that although truancy occurs nationally, its causes and effects vary according to socioeconomic and environmental conditions.

Within Nakuru County, chronic truancy presents a challenge to effective curriculum implementation and improved learner outcomes in public schools. The county's diverse socioeconomic characteristics expose learners to several risk factors, including poverty, family challenges, peer influence, and inadequate parental monitoring. Evidence from comparable Kenyan contexts indicates that these factors contribute to irregular attendance and reduced academic progress (Njenga, 2020; Kinyua, 2021). Furthermore, school-level conditions such as availability of learning resources, sanitation facilities, and learner support programs influence attendance patterns (Wambua, 2022). Since the introduction of Competency-Based Education, regular attendance has become increasingly important because learners are expected to participate actively in classroom activities, continuous assessments, and practical learning experiences. Therefore, addressing truancy remains critical to improving learning outcomes within Nakuru County public schools.

In Nakuru West Sub-County, chronic truancy has emerged as a concern affecting learners' academic engagement and achievement in public junior schools. According to the Nakuru County Education Office (2024), factors such as poverty, family instability, peer pressure, and limited parental involvement contribute significantly to absenteeism among learners. These challenges are particularly evident in public day schools where some learners experience competing responsibilities outside school, affecting their ability to attend lessons consistently. Previous studies suggest that schools implementing strong attendance policies, mentorship programs, and teacher-parent partnerships record improved learner participation and academic performance (Gichohi, 2021). Nyaga (2022) further found that chronic absenteeism is associated with behavioral challenges, school dropout tendencies, and reduced academic achievement. However, limited empirical evidence exists regarding its specific influence on learning outcomes among junior school learners in Nakuru West Sub-County.

Although previous studies have examined absenteeism and school attendance challenges globally, regionally, and nationally, limited research has specifically investigated the influence of

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chronic truancy on learning outcomes within public junior schools in Nakuru West Sub-County. Existing Kenyan studies have largely focused on general absenteeism, primary and secondary education broadly, or specific socioeconomic factors influencing attendance. However, fewer studies have examined how persistent truancy affects learners' academic achievement, competency development, classroom participation, and learning continuity within the Competency-Based Education framework. Additionally, limited attention has been given to the unique contextual factors influencing truancy in Nakuru West Sub-County. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of chronic truancy on students' learning outcomes in public junior schools in Nakuru West Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

The successful implementation of Competency-Based Education (CBE) in Kenya depends on consistent learners' attendance, active participation, and continuous engagement to achieve intended learning outcomes (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2023; Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2023). Regular attendance ensures adequate instructional time necessary for effective competency acquisition. However, this ideal is constrained by persistent truancy among learners in public junior schools.

In Nakuru West sub-county, education stakeholders, particularly teachers and school administrators, have raised concerns over increasing absenteeism associated with poverty, child labor, unstable family environments, and inadequate parental supervision (MoE, 2019; County Government of Nakuru, 2022). These factors disrupt instructional continuity and hinder student's achievement. If not addressed, truancy may lead to poor learning outcomes and weaken the implementation of CBE (Limakwang & Kinyanjui, 2024).

Despite these concerns, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent and nature of truancy's influence on learning outcomes in this context. Therefore, this study sought to examine the influence of truancy on learning outcomes in public junior schools in Nakuru West sub-county with a view of improving learners' attendance and learning outcomes, while strengthening CBE implementation.

Research Question

What was the influence of chronic truancy on students' learning outcomes in public junior schools in Nakuru West Sub-County?

Research Hypothesis

H₀: There was no statistically significant influence of chronic truancy on students' learning outcomes in public junior schools in Nakuru West Sub-County.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which explains how human development and behavior are shaped through continuous interactions between individuals and their surrounding environments. The theory proposes that learners' experiences are influenced by interconnected ecological systems, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem represents immediate

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environments such as family, teachers, peers, and classrooms, while the mesosystem explains interactions between these settings, particularly home–school relationships. The exosystem involves indirect influences such as parental employment and school policies, whereas the macrosystem represents broader cultural, economic, and educational structures. The chronosystem emphasizes how changes over time influence learners' development and educational experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this study, the theory explains how family, school, community, and institutional factors contribute to chronic truancy and subsequently influence students' learning outcomes in public junior schools in Nakuru West Sub-County.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory provides a comprehensive framework for examining chronic truancy because it recognizes that learner absenteeism results from the interaction of multiple environmental factors rather than individual behavior alone. One major strength of the theory is its holistic approach, which enables researchers to examine how family support, peer relationships, school climate, community conditions, and educational policies collectively influence attendance patterns and learning outcomes. Additionally, the theory supports the development of multi-level interventions by emphasizing collaboration among parents, teachers, school administrators, and communities in addressing truancy. Its ability to explain both immediate and broader environmental influences makes it suitable for understanding attendance challenges within the Kenyan Competency-Based Education context, where learner participation and continuous engagement are essential for competency development (Ritter et al., 2022). Therefore, the theory provides a strong foundation for analyzing the complex factors influencing chronic truancy.

Despite its usefulness, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory has some limitations when applied to the study of chronic truancy and learning outcomes. First, its broad ecological structure makes it difficult to determine which specific environmental system has the greatest influence on learner absenteeism. Since the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem interact continuously, establishing direct causal relationships between particular factors and truancy can be challenging. Furthermore, the theory gives greater emphasis to environmental influences while providing limited explanation of individual learner characteristics such as motivation, self-discipline, self-efficacy, and personal attitudes toward schooling. Abdu and Al-Hajri (2022) argue that insufficient attention to learner agency reduces the ability of ecological approaches to explain differences in attendance behaviors among students experiencing similar environmental conditions. Therefore, while the theory offers contextual understanding, complementary perspectives may be required to explain individual variations in truancy.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is applicable to this study because chronic truancy among students in public junior schools in Nakuru West Sub-County can be understood as a consequence of interactions between learners and their surrounding environments. At the microsystem level, factors such as parental supervision, teacher support, peer influence, and classroom experiences may affect students' attendance patterns. The mesosystem explains how collaboration between schools and families influences learner commitment, while the exosystem highlights indirect factors such as socioeconomic challenges, community expectations, and school management practices. The macrosystem considers national education policies, cultural beliefs,

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and economic conditions affecting school participation, while the chronosystem explains how changes over time influence attendance and academic progression (Ritter et al., 2022). Therefore, the theory provides an appropriate framework for examining how chronic truancy influences students' learning outcomes by considering interconnected social, institutional, and environmental factors.

Review of Related Literature

Chronic truancy represents the most severe and prolonged form of absenteeism, characterized by repeated and continuous absence from school over extended periods, often spanning weeks or months (EdSource, 2024). Unlike occasional or habitual truancy, it reflects deep-rooted disengagement from academic activities and diminished interest in school life. Chronic truancy is commonly associated with underlying socio-economic disadvantages, family instability, psychological distress, and institutional weaknesses in learner support systems. Learners who experience chronic absenteeism miss substantial instructional time, become emotionally detached from the school environment, and face a significantly reduced likelihood of completing their education. Within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework, which emphasizes continuous participation, formative assessment, and progressive mastery of competencies, chronic truancy severely disrupts learning continuity and undermines competency acquisition. Consequently, chronic truancy is not merely a behavioral concern but a critical indicator of systemic inadequacies within family, school, and community contexts (National Center for School Leadership, 2024).

Globally, empirical studies consistently demonstrate that chronic truancy is a strong predictor of poor learning outcomes, school dropout, and long-term socio-economic disadvantage, although important conceptual and contextual gaps remain evident. UNESCO (2023), in a large-scale cross-sectional study conducted across 46 countries, utilized comparative education data and descriptive statistical analysis to examine patterns of school attendance. The findings indicated that chronic absenteeism was a major contributor to early school dropout and was associated with adverse outcomes such as juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and long-term unemployment. While the study provides broad global insights, it adopts a generalized perspective and does not provide context-specific analysis relevant to competency-based education systems, thereby limiting its applicability to localized settings such as Kenya. To address this contextual gap, the study examined the influence of chronic truancy on learning outcomes within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework in Kenyan public junior schools.

Similarly, Gottfried (2021) conducted a longitudinal quantitative study in the United States, analyzing attendance records alongside academic indicators such as grade point averages, course progression, and graduation rates. The study applied advanced statistical techniques and found that learners who missed more than 15% of instructional time were significantly less likely to graduate on time compared to regularly attending peers. Although the study established a strong relationship between chronic absenteeism and academic outcomes, it was conducted in a different educational context and did not incorporate competency-based learning indicators. To address this conceptual gap, the present study specifically examined the influence of chronic truancy on learners' learning outcomes in the context of Competency-Based Education.

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Williams and Harper (2022), using a quasi-experimental design, evaluated intervention strategies aimed at reducing chronic absenteeism through parent-school collaboration, counselling programs, and attendance monitoring systems. The findings revealed that these interventions significantly improved learner retention and reduced dropout rates among chronically absent learners. However, the study focused on the effectiveness of intervention strategies and did not directly examine learning outcomes or competency acquisition among chronically absent learners. To address this methodological gap, the present study employed a convergent mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of chronic truancy on learning outcomes.

In Europe, Olsen (2023) employed a mixed-methods design combining survey data and interviews to examine the psychosocial consequences of chronic truancy among adolescents. The study found that chronic absenteeism was closely associated with psychological distress, including anxiety, social withdrawal, and low self-efficacy, which further hindered learners' ability to reintegrate into school. While the study offers valuable insights into the psychosocial dimensions of chronic truancy, it does not adequately examine its implications for learning outcomes within competency-based education systems. The present study therefore examined the influence of chronic truancy on learners' learning outcomes within the Competency-Based Education framework while considering the role of selected socio-economic, family-related, and school-based factors. Similarly, although Lopez and Martinez (2022) identified important predictors of chronic truancy, the study did not establish its relationship with competency-based learning outcomes.

Within the African context, chronic truancy continues to undermine efforts toward achieving equitable and quality education, although studies often emphasize determinants rather than comprehensive learning outcomes. Nakimera (2021), using a descriptive survey design in Uganda, collected data through questionnaires and academic performance records and analyzed it using descriptive statistics. The study found that learners who missed 15% or more of school days consistently performed below average in national examinations, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Although the study established a relationship between absenteeism and academic performance, it focused largely on examination outcomes and paid limited attention to broader learning outcomes such as competency acquisition and learner engagement. To address this conceptual gap, the study examined learning outcomes within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework, where competency development, learner engagement, and continuous assessment are emphasized.

Similarly, Dlamini (2022) provides valuable insights into the factors contributing to chronic truancy through a qualitative approach. However, the study does not provide quantitative evidence on the influence of chronic truancy on learners' academic outcomes, thereby limiting the empirical robustness of its findings. To address this methodological gap, the present study employed a convergent mixed-methods research design that integrated quantitative and qualitative data to provide both measurable evidence of the influence of chronic truancy on learning outcomes and in-depth contextual insights into the factors associated with persistent absenteeism.

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In Nigeria, Okafor and Chukwu (2023) conducted a correlational study using survey data and academic records analyzed through inferential statistics. The findings indicated that chronic truancy was associated with school fatigue, peer pressure, lack of psychosocial support, low self-concept, and poor academic performance among chronically absent learners. Although the study established the relationship between chronic truancy and academic performance, it did not examine learners' learning outcomes within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework, where competency acquisition, learner engagement, and continuous assessment are central indicators of learner success. Consequently, its findings have limited applicability to competency-based learning environments. To address this conceptual gap, the present study examined the influence of chronic truancy on learning outcomes among learners in public junior secondary schools implementing the Competency-Based Education framework in Kenya.

Within the Kenyan context, chronic truancy remains a significant challenge to learners' educational progression, particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged regions. Nduta (2022), using a descriptive survey design in Machakos County, found that learners from low-income families often engaged in informal employment to support household needs, resulting in prolonged absenteeism and declining interest in education. Although the study identified socio-economic factors associated with chronic truancy, it did not directly examine how persistent absenteeism influences learners' learning outcomes. To address this gap, the present study examined the influence of chronic truancy on learning outcomes among learners in public junior secondary schools within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework, extending the analysis beyond conventional academic performance to include competency acquisition, learner engagement, continuous assessment, and overall learner achievement.

Similarly, Mwangi (2024), using a longitudinal design in Nairobi County, analyzed attendance records and academic performance indicators over time and found that learners who missed more than 30% of instructional time were significantly more likely to drop out within two academic years. The study further established that chronic absenteeism disrupted cumulative learning, making academic recovery difficult. Despite its methodological strength, the study did not examine learning outcomes within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework. To address this conceptual gap, the present study examined the influence of chronic truancy on learning outcomes among learners in public junior schools implementing the Competency-Based Education framework, thereby providing context-specific evidence on how persistent absenteeism affects competency development and overall learner achievement.

Additionally, Omondi and Wekesa (2023), employing a mixed-methods approach in Kisumu County, combined survey data and interviews and found that inadequate psycho-social support, weak guidance and counselling systems, and limited community involvement significantly contributed to chronic truancy. The study further indicated that affected learners developed negative attitudes toward schooling. However, the study did not deal with the public junior schools in the CBE context. The current study sought to fill this gap by examining the influence of occasional, habitual and chronic truancy on learners' learning outcomes in public junior schools in Nakuru West sub-county.

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Likewise, Omondi and Wekesa (2023) employed a mixed-methods approach in Kisumu County, integrating survey data and interviews to examine factors associated with chronic truancy. The findings revealed that inadequate psychosocial support, weak guidance and counselling services, and limited community involvement significantly contributed to chronic truancy, with many affected learners developing negative attitudes toward schooling. However, the study was conducted outside the context of public junior schools implementing the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework, thereby limiting the transferability of its findings to competency-based learning environments in which the current study sought to address.

At the local level, in Nakuru West sub-county, chronic truancy among learners in public junior secondary schools remains a growing concern, particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged areas such as Kaptembwa, Rhonda, and Barut. These areas are characterized by high levels of poverty, unemployment, and unstable family structures, which limit effective parental supervision and reduce learners' motivation to attend school regularly. Reports by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2022) indicate that socio-economic inequalities significantly contribute to irregular school attendance in urban informal settlements. Empirical evidence further shows that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to experience persistent absenteeism, leading to reduced academic engagement and declining performance (Limakwang & Kinyanjui, 2024; Osborne et al., 2024). Family-related factors such as parental conflict, single-parent households, and limited parental monitoring further exacerbate absenteeism and weaken academic outcomes (Mario & Amunga, 2024). Within the Competency-Based Curriculum, where continuous assessment and learner participation are central, consistent attendance is critical for effective competency acquisition (KICD, 2021).

Although existing empirical studies have significantly advanced the understanding of chronic truancy, notable conceptual, methodological, and contextual gaps persist, particularly regarding its influence on learners' learning outcomes within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework. Guided by these identified gaps, the present study investigated the influence of chronic truancy on learning outcomes among learners in public junior schools in Nakuru West sub-county.

Research Design and Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods convergent research design to investigate the influence of chronic truancy on students' learning outcomes in public junior schools in Nakuru West Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya. The convergent design enabled the researcher to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data concurrently before integrating the findings during interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The quantitative component employed a cross-sectional survey design to establish the influence of occasional, habitual, and chronic truancy on learners' academic achievement, classroom participation, competency development, and overall learning outcomes. The qualitative component employed a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences and perceptions of learners, teachers, school administrators, and education officials regarding truancy and its consequences. Combining these approaches enhanced triangulation and provided comprehensive insights into the research problem (Creswell, 2018).

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The study was conducted in Nakuru West Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya, an urban and peri-urban setting characterized by diverse socioeconomic conditions and varying educational challenges. The target population comprised 9,739 participants drawn from 20 public junior schools, including 9,671 learners, 47 teachers, 20 heads of institutions, and one Sub-County Director of Education (Ministry of Education, Nakuru West Sub-County, 2024). The study sampled six public junior schools using stratified and simple random sampling techniques to ensure representation of different school characteristics. Learners were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling, while teachers were included through census sampling because of their manageable population size. Heads of institutions and the Sub-County Director of Education were selected through criterion sampling due to their leadership responsibilities and knowledge of attendance management practices (Kothari & Garg, 2023). The sampling procedures enhanced representativeness and ensured that participants provided relevant information concerning chronic truancy and learning outcomes.

Data were collected using questionnaires, focus group discussion guides, interview guides, and document analysis checklists. Questionnaires were administered to learners and teachers to obtain quantitative data regarding the frequency and patterns of truancy, factors contributing to absenteeism, and its influence on learning outcomes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with heads of institutions and the Sub-County Director of Education to obtain deeper insights into school-based attendance management strategies, policy implementation, and challenges associated with truancy. Focus group discussions with teachers provided detailed perspectives on learner attendance behaviors and academic consequences. Additionally, document analysis was conducted using attendance registers, continuous assessment records, examination results, and school reports to validate information obtained from other instruments. The use of multiple data collection methods strengthened methodological triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings (Saunders et al., 2023; Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Quantitative data collected through questionnaires were coded, entered, and analyzed using SPSS Version 27. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize patterns of chronic truancy and learning outcomes among learners. Inferential statistics, including regression analysis, were applied to determine the extent to which chronic truancy predicted variations in students' learning outcomes (Hair et al., 2022). Qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, coded, categorized, and analyzed thematically to identify emerging patterns related to causes, effects, and management of truancy. The quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of chronic truancy on learning outcomes. Ethical considerations included obtaining approval from relevant authorities, informed consent, learner assent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, anonymity, and secure storage of research data (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Kothari, 2023).

Presentation, Interpretation, and Discussion of Findings

The study also examined the influence of chronic truancy on learners' learning outcomes in public junior schools. Quantitative data collected through learners' questionnaires were complemented by qualitative evidence obtained from focus group discussions with teachers and

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interviews with Heads of Institutions (HOIs) and the Sub-County Director of Education (SCDE) to provide a comprehensive understanding of how prolonged absenteeism influences learners' learning outcomes. Table 6 presents learners' responses regarding the influence of chronic truancy on learning outcomes.

Table 1
Rating of Chronic Truancy by learners

	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Standard Dev
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)		
Long periods of absence reduce my confidence in learning.	31 (8.1)	54 (14.1)	26 (6.8)	136 (36)	135(35.3)	3.76	1.290
Chronic absenteeism influences my ability to achieve learning goals.	32 (8.4)	31 (8.2)	40 (10.5)	152(40)	125 (32.9)	3.81	1.219
Prolonged absence interferes with my academic progression.	26 (6.8)	26 (6.8)	23 (6.0)	142(37)	164 (43.0)	4.03	1.175

Source: (Field Data, 2026)

The study found that the majority of learners, 80.3%, agreed or strongly agreed that prolonged absence interferes with their academic progression, making it the most cited consequence of chronic absenteeism. This was reported with a mean of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 1.290. This supports the work of Klein and Sosu (2025), who show that learners will slow their progression. Furthermore, 72.9% of respondents reported that chronic absenteeism negatively influenced their ability to achieve learning goals. This was reported with a mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 1.219. Further 70.9% participants with a mean of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 1.175 acknowledged that long periods of absence reduced their confidence in learning. This finding is consistent with Sideridis and Alamri (2023), who found that long absence from school influences learning. These findings suggest that the effects of truancy extend beyond simple instructional loss, actively undermining both the psychological foundations of student confidence and the structural milestones of academic advancement. The descriptive findings reveal a significant consensus among respondents regarding the detrimental impact of chronic truancy on academic success and student self-efficacy.

The qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results by providing a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of chronic truancy and the mechanisms through which prolonged absenteeism influenced learners' learning outcomes. Analysis of the interview and focus group data revealed that chronic truancy was primarily associated with persistent socio-economic hardship, unstable family environments, inadequate parental supervision, chronic illness, negative peer influence, domestic violence, substance abuse, parental neglect, and limited access to essential learning resources. Rather than operating independently, these factors interacted to weaken learners' attachment to school and progressively increased the likelihood of prolonged absenteeism.

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One Head of Institution observed that learners from socio-economically vulnerable households were more likely to experience prolonged absenteeism because persistent economic hardships limited regular school attendance (HOI 6, personal communication, May 4, 2026). Similarly, the Sub-County Director of Education explained that chronic absenteeism was influenced by multiple interrelated factors, including poverty, negative peer influence, family conflicts, inadequate parental supervision, and the lack of essential learning resources such as writing materials (SCDE personal communication, May 2, 2026). These perspectives demonstrate that chronic truancy is not merely a school-based challenge but is shaped by broader socio-economic and family circumstances that undermine learners' consistent participation in education.

Participants further explained that learners who remained absent for prolonged periods frequently returned to school having missed substantial classroom instruction, practical learning experiences, continuous assessments, and collaborative learning activities. Consequently, they developed significant learning gaps, experienced declining confidence in learning, participated less actively in classroom activities, and encountered considerable difficulty readjusting to the classroom environment. Teachers further observed that supporting learners returning after prolonged absences required sustained remedial instruction, thereby reducing the time available for introducing new learning content and slowing curriculum implementation for the entire class. These findings indicate that chronic truancy has consequences that extend beyond the affected learners by disrupting instructional continuity and reducing the overall effectiveness of classroom teaching and learning.

The qualitative evidence provides important contextual explanations for the quantitative findings. The qualitative findings explain that this negative influence arises because prolonged absenteeism interrupts instructional continuity, creates cumulative learning gaps, weakens classroom engagement, delays competency acquisition, and limits opportunities for meaningful participation in learning activities. The convergence of the quantitative and qualitative findings therefore confirms that chronic truancy progressively disconnects learners from the teaching and learning process, thereby significantly undermining their learning outcomes.

These findings support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which posits that learners' development is shaped by continuous interactions among the family, school, and wider community environments. The socio-economic hardships, family instability, inadequate parental supervision, health-related challenges, and peer influences identified in this study illustrate how disruptions within learners' ecological systems influence school attendance and educational engagement. Within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework, regular attendance is fundamental because learners acquire competencies through continuous participation in classroom instruction, formative assessments, collaborative learning, practical activities, and ongoing teacher feedback. Consequently, prolonged absenteeism limits opportunities for learners to develop the knowledge, skills, values, and competencies expected at each grade level and often necessitate sustained remedial support before they can effectively re-engage in classroom learning.

The findings are consistent with those of Sideridis and Alamri (2023), Balfanz and Byrnes (2022), UNESCO (2024), and Limakwang and Kinyanjui (2024), who similarly reported that prolonged absenteeism reduces student engagement, limits competency development, hinders

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educational progression, and weakens learning outcomes. However, the present study extends previous research by demonstrating that the effects of chronic truancy are cumulative, with prolonged interruptions in school attendance progressively widening learning gaps, reducing classroom participation, increasing the demand for remedial instruction, and limiting opportunities for learners to participate fully in competency-based learning. Overall, the convergence of the quantitative and qualitative findings confirms that chronic truancy significantly undermines learners' learning outcomes by disrupting instructional continuity, weakening classroom engagement, delaying competency acquisition, and limiting learners' ability to attain the expected learning outcomes.

Hypothesis Testing

Regression Analysis of Chronic Truancy and Students' Learning Outcomes

Simple linear regression was conducted to determine whether chronic truancy statistically significantly predicted students' learning outcomes.

Table 2

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49.281	1	49.281	28.768	.000 ^b
	Residual	654.375	382	1.713		
	Total	703.656	383			

a. Dependent Variable: Learners' learning earning outcomes

b. Predictors: (Constant), Chronic Truancy

The results in Table 2 showed a correlation coefficient of $R = .265$ and an R^2 of .070. This indicated that chronic truancy accounted for 7.0% of the variation in students' learning outcomes. The remaining 93.0% could be attributed to other factors not included in the simple regression model.

Table 3

Regression Coefficients for the Influence of Chronic Truancy on learners' Learning Outcomes

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.566	.285		72.092	.000
	Chronic Truancy	-.129	.024	-.265	-5.364	.000

a. Dependent Variable: learners' learning outcomes

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The ANOVA results showed that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 382) = 28.768$, $p < .001$. The probability value was below the 0.05 significance level, indicating that chronic truancy significantly predicted variation in students' learning outcomes.

Table 4

Regression Coefficients for the Influence of Chronic Truancy on Students' Learning Outcomes

Model B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	20.566	.285	72.092	< .001
Chronic truancy	-.129	.024	-.265	-5.364 < .001

The regression coefficient for chronic truancy was $B = -.129$, with a standardised coefficient of $\beta = -.265$, $t = -5.364$, $p < .001$. The negative coefficient indicated that higher levels of chronic truancy were associated with lower students' learning outcomes. The statistically significant p-value showed that this negative influence was statistically significant.

The findings therefore provided sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there was no statistically significant influence of chronic truancy on students' learning outcomes. The study established that chronic truancy had a statistically significant negative influence on students' learning outcomes in public junior schools in Nakuru West Sub-County.

The magnitude of R^2 also showed that chronic truancy explained a relatively modest proportion of variation in learning outcomes. This finding was important because students' learning outcomes were influenced by multiple factors. Chronic truancy was therefore one contributor among other individual, family, school, socioeconomic, and contextual factors.

The regression findings complemented the descriptive and qualitative evidence. Students reported reduced confidence, difficulties in achieving learning goals, and interference with academic progression. Teachers and school administrators similarly reported learning gaps, reduced participation, delayed progression, and the need for remedial support among students who experienced prolonged absence. Taken together, the findings indicated that chronic truancy represented an important attendance-related challenge requiring coordinated intervention.

Conclusion

The study concludes that chronic truancy significantly influences students' learning outcomes in public junior schools in Nakuru West Sub-County. Persistent absenteeism reduces learners' exposure to instructional activities, limits classroom participation, affects competency development, and contributes to poor academic achievement. The findings further indicate that truancy is influenced by interconnected family, school, peer, community, and socioeconomic factors rather than being solely an individual learner problem. Therefore, addressing chronic truancy requires a holistic approach that considers the ecological environment surrounding learners. Strengthening attendance management systems and providing timely interventions are essential for promoting consistent school participation and improving learning outcomes within the Competency-Based Education framework.

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Recommendations

The study recommends that schools strengthen learner attendance monitoring through effective record-keeping, early identification of absenteeism patterns, and timely intervention strategies. Schools should enhance collaboration among teachers, parents, communities, and education authorities to address social and economic factors contributing to chronic truancy. Guidance and counselling services, mentorship programs, and learner-support initiatives should be strengthened to improve learner motivation and engagement. The Ministry of Education should develop targeted policies and programs addressing absenteeism in public junior schools, while school administrators should promote supportive learning environments that encourage regular attendance. These measures would contribute to reducing chronic truancy and improving students' academic achievement and competency development.

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