# A STUDY TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC FACTORS WHICH AFFECT TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

B. J. WORTHINGTON

# A STUDY TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC FACTORS WHICH AFFECT TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

An Abstract

Presented to the

Faculty of the Graduate School

Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Education Specialist

by

B. J. Worthington

July 1991

# ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify factors which affect teacher absenteeism. The four factors examined were teacher gender, grade grouping taught, teacher's years of experience, and method of absentee reporting. The sample group included 807 teachers of all grade levels in the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System during the 1989-90 school year. The study was a causal-comparative design and means were analyzed using a t-test for independent samples at the .05 level of confidence.

Females were found to have a significantly higher absentee rate than males. Teachers who contacted the principal to report an impending absence had a significantly higher absentee rate than those who contacted the secretary or vice-principal. There was a significantly higher absentee rate for teachers with 30-44 years of experience when compared to teachers with less experience. Elementary teachers were also observed to have a significantly higher absentee rate than the middle and high school teachers.

# A STUDY TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC FACTORS WHICH AFFECT TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

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July 1991

To the Graduate and Research Council:

I am submitting herewith a Field Study written by B. J. Worthington entitled "A Study to Identify Specific Factors Which Affect Teacher Absenteeism." I have examined the final copy of this paper for form and content, and I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Education Specialist, with a major in Administration and Supervision.

George M. Rawlins
Major Professor

We have read this Field Study
and recommend its acceptance.

Donald B. Lamberth
Minor Professor
or
Second Committee Member

Allan E. Williams
Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Graduate
and Research Council:

William H. Ellis
Dean of the Graduate School

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express sincere appreciation to Dr. George Rawlins, Dr. Donald Lambert, and Dr. Allan Williams, Professors of Education, Austin Peay State University for their aid, guidance, and time given beyond the call of duty during the entire study.

Appreciation is also extended to Mr. David Baker, Clarksville-Montgomery County School System Personnel Director, and his staff for their valuable assistance in making this study possible.

Additionally, the author wishes to thank his wife and mother-in-law for their help and understanding during the study. A very special thanks to the author's mother for the support she has always given.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Teacher absenteeism is a growing concern for authorities in the educational field. To combat the problem, many school systems are now incorporating attendance policies into teacher evaluations, while other systems are designing incentive plans to encourage teachers to have a better record of attendance.

The cost of teacher absenteeism is staggering. "Approximately two billion dollars is spent nationwide as almost 200,000 teachers call in sick and a substitute teacher is hired for the day."[1] However, the substitute teacher does not account for all expenditures related to teacher absenteeism. There are administrative costs and teacher benefits which are paid despite the teacher's absence.

In addition to the financial concerns of absenteeism, the presence of the regular teacher in the classroom is of great importance. There are several studies which suggest substitute teachers are less effective than regular classroom teachers. One study conducted by the Metropolitan School Study Council of Columbia University in 1980 concluded, "substitute teachers were educationally ineffective."[2] Manlove and Elliot also reported, "substitute teachers are significantly less effective in the classroom than are the regular teachers."[3]

The Educational Research Service conducted a nation-wide survey in 1978-79 on teacher absenteeism. According to the study, the average number of days absent per year was 8.0.[4] Also, a study by the

American Management Association concluded, "It is reasonable to expect employees to miss only three percent of their work time: a two percent absence rate is attainable."[5]

During the 1989-90 school year the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System exceeded both the average number of days absent and the three percent absence rate. For the system, the average number of days absent for full time teachers employed was 8.79 days. This equates to a 4.3 percent absence rate. These absentee figures accounted for $371,478.42 spent from the substitute account during that school year. The expenses from the system's substitute teacher account during the 1985-86 school year were approximately $150,000.00 less than the expenses incurred during the 1989-90 school year. As money for schools becomes increasingly more difficult to obtain, the cost of teacher absenteeism could become a focus for school system authorities.

## Statement of the Problem

The major purpose of this study was to determine if there were specific factors which affected teacher absenteeism. The four factors studied were gender, method of absentee reporting, grade grouping taught, and years of experience.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and determine if there were specific factors which affected the absentee rate of teachers. Based on the purpose of this study, the following questions were examined:

1. Will there be a significant difference in male and female absentee rates?

2. Will there be a significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on the method used by the school for absentee reporting?

3. Will there be a significant difference in the absentee rate of elementary, middle, and high school teachers?

4. Will there be a significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on their years of experience.

## Statement of the Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between male and female absentee rates.

2. There will be no significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on the method used by the school for absentee reporting.

3. There will be no significant difference in the absentee rate of elementary, middle, and high school teachers.

4. There will be no significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on their years of experience.

## Significance of the Study

Teacher absenteeism is a problem which has been increasing in recent years. This increase is costing states millions of dollars to provide substitute teachers. The future educational costs to the students and society could also be relatively substantial.

The Clarksville-Montgomery County School System does not have a current absentee monitoring system, but records do indicate for the 1989-90 school year that $347,000.00 was budgeted for substitute teachers, and $371,478.42 was actually spent. This could be an

indicator of the rising number of teachers who are absent during the school year.

This study could have an impact on the financial status of the entire local school system. Should the study show any significant differences in the absentee rate of teachers because of the factors examined, further study could be done and recommendations made to lower the absentee rates, thereby saving the school system funds which could be utilized for other educational purposes, as well as, improving learning for the students.

## Limitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to the teachers of the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System.

2. The study was only conducted for one school year, 1989-90.

3. There was no specific reason given for any absence counted.

4. Only full time teachers were included in the study. Part-time teachers, teachers who transferred during the school year, and teachers shared between schools were excluded.

## Definition of Terms

The following definitions were applied to the terms for use in this study:

1. Absence:

> a. sick leave--illness of an employee from natural causes or accident, quarantine, or illness or death of a member of the immediate family of an employee, including the employee's wife or husband, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, brother-in-law, and sister-in-law; however, upon written request of the employee accompanied by a statement from her physician verifying pregnancy, an employee who goes on maternity leave shall be allowed to use all or a portion of her

accumulated sick leave for maternity leave purposes during the period of her physical disability only, as determined by a physician.[6]

b. personal leave--absence from work not within the sick leave regulations.[7]

c. leave of absence--an officially approved temporary suspension of employment, not to exceed two weeks, initiated at the employee's request.[8]

2. Method of Absentee Reporting: The person to whom the teacher directly notifies of an impending absence.

3. Elementary School: Any school which houses grades K-5.

4. Middle School: Any school which houses grades 6-8.

5. High School: Any school which houses grades 9-12.

6. Teacher: A full time employee who works in one school for the entire school day, and year, and is hired for the purpose of instruction. Librarians were included as teachers.

7. t-test: "A parametric test of significance used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the means of two independent samples at a selected probability level."[9]

8. Absentee Average: The total number of days absent divided by the number of teachers in the category.

9. Absentee Rate: The average days absent calculated as a percentage.

# Notes

[1]Susan T. Hill, You Can't Afford for Teachers to Be Out, So Take These Steps Now to Stop Absenteeism (ERIC, ED 214 233, 1982), 3.

[2]James Capitan, Teacher Absenteeism (ERIC, ED 185 699, 1980), 1.

[3]Donald Manlove and Peggy Elliot. Absent Teachers. . . Another Handicap for Students? (ERIC, ED 170 941, 1979), 3.

[4]Paul J. Porwell. Teacher Absenteeism: Experience and Practices of School Systems (Education Research Service Inc., 1981), 7.

[5]Hill, 2.

[6]Clarksville-Montgomery County Board Policy Manual: G-24.

[7]Clarksville-Montgomery County Board Policy Manual: G-20.

[8]Clarksville-Montgomery County Board Policy Manual: G-28.

[9]L. R. Gay, Educational Research Competencies for Analysis and Application (Columbus: Merrill, 1987), 552.

# CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following is a review of the most relevant literature on teacher absenteeism. The literature on the specific factors in this study was sparse in the educational field as opposed to the field of industry. This lack of research led the Educational Research Service Inc. to conduct a nation-wide study in the early 1980's. That ERS study is included in this review, as well as, another comprehensive study conducted by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. Some of the absentee factors included in this study were not specifically addressed as the main focus of some of the literature reviewed, but were examined by the researchers for secondary purposes. There were some discrepencies in the findings and much of the research was relatively current, prompting one to assume there was more room for study as the topic becomes increasingly important for school systems.

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association conducted a study in 1977-78 to review the trends and characteristics of professional staff absences and develop means of dealing with the problem. The Association accepted 135 districts into the study which were representative of all systems across the state in size, staff composition, and geographic location.

The results of the study indicated "elementary teachers have a slightly higher absence rate than secondary teachers."[1] Secondary schools included middle and junior high for this study. The elementary teachers averaged 8.3 days absent per year, while the secondary staff averaged 8.2 days for the same period. Similar results of a higher absentee rate for elementary teachers were also cited in studies conducted at the University of Michigan and University of Southern Mississippi.[2]

The Pennsylvania study also concluded females had a significantly higher absence rate than male professional staff members.[3] Male teachers were absent 7.2 days and females were absent 8.9 days. These findings were consistent with a study conducted by the Lakeland Community School Corporation (Syracuse) in 1973-74. The Lakeland study discovered the female absentee rate to be significantly higher than males.[4] The Philadelphia Suburban School Study Council and the South Pennsylvania School Study Council also revealed females had a higher absentee rate than males in a study conducted in 1968-69.[5] Studies conducted at the University of Michigan and University of Southern Mississippi also reported a higher female absentee rate.[6] In a study of several school systems in Ohio, James Capitan concluded "elementary female teachers had a higher rate of absenteeism than other identifiable groups."[7]

Absentee reporting procedures were also observed in the Pennsylvania study. The researchers concluded "the practice of calling the principal evidently has a positive effect on the absence rate."[8]

In a study conducted by Edwin Bridges in 1980, 488 elementary

school teachers were surveyed to determine whether job satisfaction was a factor in absenteeism. The researcher used a questionnaire and personnel records to obtain data for the study. Bridges identified method of notification for an impending absence as a control for his study. He examined how teacher absenteeism was affected by the person to whom they notified of the absence.[9] Bridges used multiple regression analyses to estimate relationships between job satisfaction and absenteeism. He found from all multiple regressions that "if the teacher was required to phone his immediate supervisor of an impending absence, the teacher was much less likely to be absent than if he phoned a faceless bureaucrat."[10]

Donald Winkler obtained similar conclusions from his absentee study of fifty-seven elementary schools in California and Wisconsin. His results indicated short-term teacher absences could be reduced by almost one-quarter if teachers were required to report all absences directly to the principal.[11]

The Antioch Illinois Community Consolidated Schools incorporated the practice of contacting the principal directly into an attendance incentive program for the system. The teachers were required to call the principal directly and justify the absence. The absentee rate dropped from almost ten days per year in 1978-79 to 4.26 days per year in 1982-83. There were several steps included in the incentive program making it difficult to determine which had the greatest effect on absentee reduction, but school officials had reason to believe all factors affected the teachers' absence rate.[12]

The Chicago Panel on Public School Finance undertook a study

in 1983 to examine the financial aspects of teacher absences and substitute coverage. The Panel collected Chicago Board of Education documents and reports, and talked with staff members in the central office, district offices, and the schools. The absentee rates of elementary and high school teachers were examined in the study. Both groups had an absentee rate of approximately ten days for the year. The average range of the absentees for elementary teachers was three to sixteen in contrast to the high school teachers which ranged from eight to thirteen. "The range in average absence rates of high schools, then is not so great as it is for elementary teachers."[13]

Stephen Jacobsen conducted a study in 1986 to determine whether pay incentives could effectively motivate teachers to reduce the absentee rate in the Sugar Hill Central School District. Attendance data were collected from the district's personnel director and included 1985-86 and 1986-87 school years. The system had begun an attendance incentive plan and Jacobsen was seeking any changes in the teachers' attendance. Teacher gender, marital status, teaching experience, and level of instruction were all observed in the study to determine if there were any significant associations between specific teacher characteristics and teacher absence behavior.[14] The findings concluded there were zero-order correlations between the rate of teacher absenteeism and the four factors studied.[15] Although, married females were informally reported to have changed their attendance behavior.

Scott and McClellan studied the absentee rate of teachers at all junior high and senior high schools in an urban area in the

Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. They collected teacher data from teacher surveys and personnel records. The variable measures for the study included demographic data, absentee data, job satisfaction measure, central life interest measure, job involvement measure, role conflict measure, and reason for absence. Three statistical techniques were used, the t-test, hierarchial regression, and a step-wise regression analysis. The average number of days absent for males was 4.83 contrasting the females' 6.92 days. The study concluded "the total days absent for a man are best explained by age, job involvement, attitude toward pay, and general attitude toward pay."[16] "Women's absences were best explained by the amount of hours they wished to work, attitude toward pay, and distance from work."[17] "This study confirmed that women take a significantly higher number of days off than men, but that the actual number of occurences of women's absenteeism is not significantly greater."[18]

In 1982 the Educational Research Service conducted the first nation-wide study of teacher absenteeism. A survey was conducted with the assistance of the American Association of School Personnel Administrators. The survey was designed to obtain accurate and reliable data on the extent and nature of absenteeism and gain information on local school systems' absentee policies and procedures. The surveys were sent in August 1979 to superintendents in 1,423 school systems with enrollments of 300 or more students. A Guide Sheet was included with the survey to provide instructions for reporting data. Included in the Guide Sheet was a complete description of the term, "teacher." The teacher was identified as "full-time tenured or

non-tenured classroom teachers, instructional specialists, guidance counselors, librarians, nurses, and homebound instructors."[19]

The sample group for the study included 470 schools. The sample groups were divided into four enrollment categories: a) 25,000 or more, b) 10,000 to 24,999, c) 2,500 to 9,999; and d) 300 to 2,499. The data, average numbers of days absent and absence rates, were further classified for research purposes. The classifications were as follows: 1) grade spans, 2) geographic regions, 3) standard metropolitan statistical area, 4) types of communities served, 5) average salary paid teachers, 6) method of absentee reporting, 7) negotiating status, and 8) personal leave provisions.

The researchers calculated the average number of days absent per teacher by dividing the total number of work days teachers were absent in 1978-79 by the total number of teachers in the system. Based upon the researcher's calculations, the mean teacher absence rate for elementary teachers was 4.8 percent while high school teachers had a 4.2 percent absentee rate.[20] The study also discovered the average number of absences by method of reporting was 9.1 for systems using a telephone answering service, and 7.6 days for systems which required direct contact with a specific person.[21]

Of all the four factors studied, method of contact was the one most consistently cited in the literature. All studies noted a reduction in teacher absenteeism when teachers were required to contact their immediate supervisor. Gender was the next most commonly studied factor. Most studies reported females to have a higher absentee rate, but not always showing a significant difference. The research

also concluded elementary school teachers had a higher absentee rate than other grade groupings, but again, significant differences were not always noted. The least mentioned factor in the literature was years of experience. Only one study cited it, and the researcher found no relationship between it and teacher absenteeism.

The review of research showed some discrepencies in the findings, yet the amount of relevant research available was sparse. This could be indicative of the inadequate record keeping techniques of systems, or the lack of recognition of the existing problem, or quite possibly, many school systems may not have a teacher absentee problem.

## Notes

[1]Pennsylvania School Boards Association Inc. Teacher Absenteeism A Professional Staff Study (ERIC, ED 166 816, 1978), 15.

[2]Pennsylvania School Boards Association Inc., 19.

[3]Pennsylvania School Boards Association Inc., 19.

[4]Pennsylvania School Boards Association Inc., 19.

[5]Pennsylvania School Boards Association Inc., 19.

[6]Pennsylvania School Boards Association Inc., 20.

[7]James Capitan, Teacher Absenteeism (ERIC, ED 185 699, 1980), 7.

[8]Pennsylvania School Boards Association Inc., 27.

[9]Edwin M. Bridges, "Job Satisfaction and Teacher Absenteeism," Educational Administrative Quarterly 16, no. 2 (1980): 47.

[10]Bridges, 53.

[11]Donald Winkler, "The Effects of Sick-Leave Policy on Teacher Absenteeism," Industrial and Labor Relations Review 33, no. 3 (1983): 23.

[12]Donald Skidmore, "We Used These Few Simple Steps to Cut Teacher Absenteeism in Half--And Increased Productive Class Time and Community Support in the Bargain," American School Board Journal 171, no. 3 (1984): 41.

[13]Hanna Meara, Class Coverage in the Chicago Public Schools--A Study of Teacher Absences and Substitute Coverage (ERIC, ED 292 182, 1983), 19.

[14]Stephen L. Jacobsen, "Pay Incentives and Teacher Absence--One District's Experience," Urban Education 23, no. 4 (1989): 386.

[15]Jacobsen, 383.

[16]K. Dow Scott and Elizabeth L. McClellan, "Gender Differences in Absenteeism," Public Personnel Management 19, no. 2 (1990): 248.

[17]Scott and McClellan, 248.

[18]Scott and McClellan, 251.

[19]Paul J. Porwell. Teacher Absenteeism: Experience and Practices of School Systems (Education Research Service Inc., 1981), 2.

[20]Porwell, 17.

[21]Porwell, 21.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine if there were specific factors which affected teacher absenteeism. Four questions were studied:

1. Will there be a significant difference in the male and female absentee rate?

2. Will there be a significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on the method used by the school for absentee reporting?

3. Will there be a significant difference in the absentee rate of elementary, middle, and high school teachers?

4. Will there be a significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on their years of experience?

The procedures used to answer these questions will be described in this chapter.

## Null Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between male and female absentee rates.

2. There will be no significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on the method used by the school for absentee reporting.

3. There will be no significant difference in the absentee rate of elementary, middle, and high school teachers.

4. There will be no significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on their years of experience.

## Description of Subjects

The sample group for this study was the 807 full time teachers employed by the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System during the 1989-90 school year. Only teachers who worked in one school for the entire year were included. All transfers, part-time teachers, and shared teachers were disregarded. Librarians were included in the study because they were used in the schools for instructional purposes, and their calendar year was synonymous with the teacher calendar.

There were twelve elementary schools, four middle schools, four high schools, and one vocational technical high school included in this study. In the schools, there were 421 elementary teachers, 209 high school teachers and 177 middle school teachers. By gender, there were 162 males and 645 females.

## Design and Procedures

Permission to conduct this causal-comparative study was granted by the system's Director of Personnel. Collection of the daily absentee data was obtained from the system's payroll records. A 1989-90 Annual Report of Professional Personnel was used to gather the information about the teachers' gender, and years of experience. The 1989-90 school directory and payroll records were used to identify each teacher's respective school. To determine the contact person at each school,

the school was contacted and asked to identify the person who received notification of a teacher's impending absence.

All teacher data were entered into an Appleworks data base and categorized into report form according to method of absentee reporting, years teaching experience, school type, and gender. After reports were completed, the categories were separated in the following manner:

1. Years Experience: Teachers were grouped into fifteen year intervals based upon the years of experience represented in the sample group. There were 424 teachers in the 0-14 years of experience category, 343 teachers in the 15-29 years of experience category, and 40 teachers in the 30-44 years of experience category.

2. Gender: Teachers were separated into male and female groupings. There were 645 females and 162 males identified in the sample population.

3. School Type: Teachers were divided into elementary, middle, and high school categories. There were 421 elementary school teachers, 177 middle school teachers, and 209 high school teachers used in this study.

4. Contact Person: Teachers were grouped by the person who was designated as the absentee contact individual in their school. There were 580 teachers who reported impending absences to the principal, 58 who reported impending absences to the secretary, and 169 who reported impending absences to the vice-principal.

Means were determined for each category and a t-test for independent samples applied to each hypothesis to determine if there was a statistical significance at the .05 level of confidence.

# CHAPTER 4

# RESULTS

This chapter contains a summary of the data used to test each hypothesis by the methods described in Chapter 3.

## Analysis of Data

### Null Hypothesis One:

There will be no significant difference between male and female absentee rates. A t-test for independent samples was applied to determine if the mean absentee rate for males was significantly different than the mean absentee rate for females at the .05 level of confidence. Table 4.1 shows a comparison of the means of each group.

There were 645 females and 162 males included in the population sample. The mean absentee average was 9.29 days for females and 6.7 for males. A t-value of 3.86 was computed and a t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 4.1

Absentee Averages for Population of Males and Females

| Group | N | Mean | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Males | 162 | 6.7 | 3.86 |
| Females | 645 | 9.29 | |

Null hypothesis one was rejected. Female teachers had a significantly higher absentee rate than males.

Null Hypothesis Two:

There will be no significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on the method used by the school for absentee reporting. A t-test for independent samples was applied to determine if the absentee rate of teachers in schools which required different methods of absentee reporting was significantly different at the .05 level of confidence. Tables 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 show a comparison of the means for each group.

There were 580 teachers who reported impending absences to the principal and 58 teachers who reported absences to the secretary. The absentee average for the teachers who contacted the principal was 9.27 and 8.62 for those who contacted the secretary. A t-value of .77 was computed for the teachers who contacted the principal as opposed to the secretary. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 4.2

Absentee Averages for Method of Absentee Reporting: Principal and Secretary

| Group | N | Mean | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Principal | 580 | 9.27 | .77 |
| Secretary | 58 | 8.62 | |

There were 58 teachers who reported impending absences to the secretary and 169 who reported absences to the vice-principal. The absentee average for teachers who reported to the secretary was 8.62 and 7.18 for those who reported to the vice-principal. A t-value of 1.8 was computed for teachers who contacted the secretary as opposed to the vice-principal. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 4.3

Absentee Averages for Method of Absentee Reporting: Secretary and Vice-Principal

| Group | N | Mean | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Secretary | 58 | 8.62 | 1.8 |
| Vice-Principal | 169 | 7.18 | |

There were 580 teachers who reported impending absences to the principal and 169 who reported absences to the vice-principal. The absentee average for those teachers contacting the principal was 9.27 and 7.18 for those contacting the vice-principal. A t-value of 3.48 was computed for teachers who contacted the principal as opposed to the vice-principal. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 4.4

Absentee Averages for Method of Absentee Reporting: Principal and Vice-Principal

| Group | N | Mean | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Principal | 580 | 9.27 | 3.48 |
| Vice-Principal | 169 | 7.18 | |

Null hypothesis two was partially rejected. Teachers who contacted the principal as opposed to the vice-principal had a significantly higher absentee rate. There was no significant difference found in the absentee rate of those teachers who contacted the secretary as opposed to the vice-principal or those who notified the principal as opposed to the secretary.

Null Hypothesis Three:

There will be no significant difference in the absentee rate of elementary, middle, and high school teachers. A t-test for independent

samples was applied to determine if the absentee rate was significantly different for teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The level of confidence was .05. Tables 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 show a comparison of the means for each group.

There were 421 elementary teachers, and 177 middle school teachers. The absentee average for the elementary teachers was 9.58 and 8.20 for the middle school teachers. A t-value of 1.97 was computed for elementary and middle school teachers. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 4.5

Absentee Averages for Elementary and Middle School Teachers

| Group | N | Mean | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Elementary | 421 | 9.58 | 1.97 |
| Middle | 177 | 8.20 | |

There were 421 elementary teachers and 209 high school teachers. The absentee average for elementary teachers was 9.58 and 7.69 for high school teachers. A t-value of 2.86 was computed for elementary and high school teachers. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 4.6

Absentee Averages for Elementary and High School Teachers

| Group | N | Mean | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Elementary | 421 | 9.58 | 2.86 |
| High School | 209 | 7.69 | |

There were 177 middle school teachers and 209 high school teachers. The absentee average for middle school teachers was 8.2 and 7.69 for high school teachers. A t-value of .85 was computed for middle and high school teachers. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 4.7

Absentee Averages for Middle and High School Teachers

| Group | N | Mean | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Middle | 177 | 8.2 | .85 |
| High School | 209 | 7.69 | |

Null hypothesis three was partially rejected. Elementary teachers had a significantly higher absentee rate than the middle or high school teachers, although the difference was very small between the

elementary and middle school teachers. No significant difference was noted in the absentee averages of high school and middle school teachers.

Null Hypothesis Four:

There will be no significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on their years of experience. A t-test for independent samples was applied to determine if the teachers' years of experience will cause a significant difference in their absentee rate at the .05 level of significance. Tables 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10 show a comparison of means for each group.

There were 424 teachers in the 0-14 years of experience group and 343 teachers in the 15-29 years of experience group. The absentee average for the 0-14 group was 8.68 and 8.61 for the 15-29 group. A t-value of .17 was computed for teachers with 0-14 and 15-29 years of experience. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 4.8

Absentee Averages for Teachers with 0-14 and 15-29 Years of Experience

| Group | N | Mean | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-14 | 424 | 8.68 | .17 |
| 15-29 | 343 | 8.61 | |

There were 424 teachers in the 0-14 years of experience group and 40 teachers in the 30-44 years of experience group. The absentee average for the 0-14 group was 8.68 and 11.4 for the 30-44 group. A t-value of 2.3 was computed for teachers with 0-14 and 30-44 years experience. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 4.9

Absentee Averages for Teachers with 0-14 and 30-44 Years of Experience

| Group | N | Mean | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-14 | 424 | 8.68 | 2.3 |
| 30-44 | 40 | 11.4 | |

There were 343 teachers in the 15-29 years of experience group and 40 in the 30-44 years of experience group. The absentee average was 8.61 for the 15-29 group and 11.4 for 30-44 group. A t-value of 2.1 was computed for teachers with 15-29 and 30-44 years of experience. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 4.10

Absentee Averages for Teachers with 15-29 and 30-44 Years of Experience

| Group | N | Mean | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15-29 | 343 | 8.61 | 2.1 |
| 30-44 | 40 | 11.4 | |

Null hypothesis four was partially rejected. Teachers with 30-44 years of experience had a significantly higher absentee rate than the teachers with 0-14 years of experience or those with 15-29 years of experience. There was no significant difference found between the 0-14 group and 15-29 group.

## Summary of Results

This study identified some specific factors which affected the rate of teacher absenteeism. Of the four factors studied, some were observed to affect absenteeism significantly, while others revealed no significance.

Females were found to have a significantly higher absentee rate than males. The comparison of 645 females and 162 males yielded a female average absentee of 9.29 days as opposed to the 6.7 average for males. A t-value of 3.86 was computed. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence.

The absentee rate of teachers who contacted the principal was

significantly higher than the teachers who contacted the secretary or vice-principal. There were 580 teachers who contacted the principal to report an impending absence, 58 who notified the secretary, and 169 who contacted the vice-principal. The absentee average for teachers was 9.27 days for those who contacted the principal, 8.62 for those who contacted the secretary, and 7.18 for those who notified the vice-principal. A t-value of 3.48 was computed for teachers who contacted the principal as opposed to the vice-principal. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence. There was no significant difference found in the absentee rates of teachers who contacted the secretary as opposed to those teachers who contacted the principal or vice-principal.

Elementary teachers had a significantly higher absentee rate than their counterparts in the middle and high schools. For this study, there were 421 elementary teachers, 209 high school teachers, and 177 middle school teachers. The absentee average for elementary school teachers was 9.58 days, 7.69 for high school teachers, and 8.20 for middle school teachers. Both t-values used for the statistical comparisons between elementary teachers and the other school categories were greater than the t-value of 1.96 which was needed for significance at the .05 level of confidence. It should be noted the difference was minimal when comparing the middle and elementary school teachers. A t-value of 1.97 was computed for the comparison between the two groups. A t-value equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed to obtain significance at the .05 level of confidence. There was no significant

difference discovered between the absentee rates of high school and middle school teachers.

A comparison of the groups with varied experience levels yielded conclusions that the more experience a teacher has, the greater the absentee rate. There were 424 teachers in the 0-14 years of experience category, 343 teachers in the 15-29 years of experience category, and 40 teachers in the 30-44 years of experience category. The absentee average for the 0-14 group was 8.68, 8.61 for the 15-29 group, and 11.4 for the 30-44 group. In both comparisons to the less experienced groups, the 30-44 group exceeded the 1.96 *t*-value which was needed for significance at the .05 level of confidence confirming a higher absentee rate for this group. No significant difference was discovered between the 0-14 group and the 15-29 group.

# CHAPTER 5

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if there were specific factors which affected teacher absenteeism. The four factors examined were gender, years of experience, method of absentee reporting, and grade group taught. The focus of this study was to answer four research questions:

1. Will there be a significant difference in male and female absentee rates?

2. Will there be a significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on the method used by the school for absentee reporting?

3. Will there be a significant difference in the absentee rate of elementary, middle, and high school teachers?

4. Will there be a significant difference in the absentee rate of teachers based on their years of experience?

A review of the literature revealed limited information about the questions under investigation. The research revealed a lack of scientific research on many of the factors examined by this study, prompting a need for further research. This present study was conducted

to contribute to the existing literature, and provide information on factors which had been examined on a restricted basis.

The empirical portion of this study included 807 full time teachers in the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System during the 1989-90 school year. The data were collected from personnel records, payroll records, and the system directory. Absentee averages were compared to determine if any specific factors could be identified which relate to teacher absenteeism. A t-test for independent samples was applied to the data at the .05 level of confidence.

There was a significant difference discovered in the absentee rate of females as compared to males. This significance led to rejection of the null hypothesis.

Teachers who contacted the principal as opposed to the vice-principal had a significantly higher absentee rate. No significance was noted between the teachers who contacted the principal as opposed to the secretary or those who contacted the secretary as opposed to the vice-principal.

This study discovered elementary teachers had a significantly higher absentee rate than teachers in the middle and high schools. It should be noted there was very little difference in the absentee rate of the middle school teachers as compared to the elementary teachers. There was no significant difference observed in the absentee rates of teachers in the middle school as opposed to those in the high school.

A teacher's years of experience was found to significantly affect their absentee rate. There was a significantly higher absentee rate

for teachers with 30-44 years experience when compared to those with 0-14 years and 15-29 years. No significance was noted between the 0-14 year group and the 15-19 year group.

## Conclusions

Method of absentee reporting was the only factor cited in the literature which consistently affected teacher absenteeism. All studies noted a positive effect of reducing teacher absences when teachers were required to notify an immediate supervisor of an impending absence. This present study partially contradicted the supporting literature. An explanation for this could be that the studies in the review examined how direct contact with an immediate supervisor within the school would affect absenteeism as opposed to a person removed from the school setting. All contact persons in this study were located in the schools.

This present study noted a significant difference in the absentee rate of female teachers as opposed to males. Most literature reviewed discovered females to have a higher absentee rate, therefore supporting the findings of this study. Some studies reviewed did not cite significance in the absentee rates.

Experience was also identified by this study as a significant factor affecting absenteeism in the 30-44 years range. Only one study was reviewed which made a reference to teaching experience and absenteeism, and no correlation was made between the two.

This study partially agreed with the literature on absenteeism and grade group taught. This study and the literature found elementary teachers to have a higher absentee rate than middle and high school

teachers. The literature did not cite any significant differences, but this present study found a significant difference in the absentee rate of elementary teachers when compared to middle and high school teachers. No significance was noted when comparing middle and high school teachers. It should be noted there were no studies reviewed which examined middle school teacher absenteeism specifically.

This study was conducted to add to the existing literature and provide more conclusive findings about the specific factors which affect teacher absenteeism in the local school system. There were four major conclusions drawn from this study:

1. The female absentee rate was significantly higher than males.

2. The absentee rate of teachers who contacted the principal was significantly higher than the teachers who contacted the secretary or vice-principal to report an impending absence.

3. The absentee rate of elementary teachers was significantly higher than middle and high school teachers.

4. The absentee rate of teachers with 30-44 years of experience was significantly higher than teachers with 0-14 or 15-29 years of experience.

The purpose of this study was to identify factors which affect teacher absenteeism. Hypothesis one was rejected and hypotheses two, three, and four were partially rejected confirming that there were some specific factors which significantly affected teacher absenteeism.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were made after conducting the study:

1. This study should be duplicated on a larger scale using a more heterogeneous sample.

2. Further study should be done to identify other factors affecting teacher absenteeism.

3. This study should be conducted over a longer period of time.

4. Further study should be done to verify that the factors examined in this study affect absenteeism consistently.

5. It is recommended this study be made available to the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System.

6. The groups identified as having significantly higher absentee rates should be further studied to determine reasons for the absences and identify methods to reduce their absenteeism.

# APPENDIXES

# APPENDIX A

## Request for Permission to Conduct Study

106 Stone Mountain Road
Clarksville, Tennessee 37042
February 10, 1991

Mr. David Baker
Personnel Director
Clarksville-Montgomery County School System
501 Franklin Street
Clarksville, Tennessee 37040

Dear Mr. Baker:

I would like to conduct a study of teacher absenteeism in the local school system. The purpose of the study will be to identify specific factors which affect teacher absences. The four factors which will be examined are teacher gender, grade grouping taught, years of experience, and method used by the school for absentee reporting. Teacher names and personal data will not be needed for the study.

I would appreciate your cooperation in this study.

Sincerely,

B. J. Worthington

B. J. Worthington

# APPENDIX B

## Director of Personnel's Permission Form

# CLARKSVILLE-MONTGOMERY COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

P.O. Box 867 • 501 Franklin Street • Clarksville, Tennessee 37041-0867 • 615-648-5600

avid Baker
irector of Personnel

July 17, 1991

B. J. Worthington
106 Stone Mountain Road
Clarksville, Tennessee 37042

Dear Mr. Worthington:

This letter is in reference to your request to conduct a study of teacher absenteeism in the local school system. I understand teacher names and personal data will not be needed for the study.

Permission is granted to conduct the study.

Sincerely,

David E. Baker

DEB:clg

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