THE IMPACT OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF CHRONICALLY ABSENT GRADE 5 STUDENTS

by

Sakeena Ash

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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2023

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ABSTRACT

Chronic absenteeism has been shown to be a strong predictor of student achievement. However, there is a lack of research studies that examine if differences exist among chronically absent students in Title I and non-Title I settings. The purpose of this causal-comparative study was to determine if socioeconomic status imparts any additional impacts on the achievement of chronically absent students as measured by the Virginia SOLs. The data collected include achievement data from the Virginia SOLs. A quantitative research design was used to examine, analyze, and compare standardized mathematics, English, and science test scores along with attendance rates of fifth grade students attending both Title I and non-Title I schools in the Hampton Roads metropolitan area of Virginia. The population sample consisted of 170 students enrolled in 19 different elementary schools in a Virginia school district. Three two-way analysis of variances (ANOVAS) were used to analyze the samples. Student achievement data for math, English, and science were examined and results indicated that there was no statistically significant interaction between school setting and student attendance. The conclusion along with limitations and recommendations for future research are reported.

Keywords: chronic absenteeism, absenteeism, attendance, low-income, socioeconomic status, student achievement

Dedication

…but God. "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26, NIV). This work is dedicated to the One who gave me the strength and resilience to complete this task. I also dedicate this dissertation to my family. I thank my husband, children, parents, sister, and brother for their love and support throughout this journey.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Jillian Wendt for everything she has done to help me along the way. As my chair, she has shown patience and provided me with encouragement when needed the most. I am confident that God allowed our paths to cross at this period in life and I am forever grateful for her expertise and support. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Roger Dunnick for serving as my committee member and providing me with helpful feedback. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my late student who sparked my initial interest in how chronic absenteeism impacts achievement—may he rest in peace. The influence of these individuals facilitated the completion of my research and dissertation.

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List of Abbreviations

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Average Daily Attendance (ADA)

Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE)

Career Inventory Attitude scale (CMI-AS)

Computer Adaptive Test (CAT)

Economically Disadvantaged (ED)

Education Commission of the States (ECS)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

National School Climate Committee (NSCC)

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

Office of Safe and Supportive Schools (OSSS)

Performance Level Descriptors (PLD)

Process-Person-Context-Time Model (PPCT)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Standards of Learning (SOL)

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

Student Information System (SIS)

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The educational system was designed with regular school attendance in mind, so in order for a child to get the most out of school, their attendance is necessary. When students are not present for school, they miss out on valuable instruction. In the case of chronic absenteeism, when students miss 10% or more of a school year, there are lasting effects that may impact their adult lives (Gottfried, 2019). The impact chronic absenteeism has on student achievement is a topic that has gained a lot of popularity in recent years. The research suggests the impact is negative, but more is needed to identify the effects of chronic absenteeism on specific populations of students—particularly those in Title I settings. This chapter will cover the background, problem, purpose, significance, and identify the research questions and definitions related to the effect of chronic absenteeism on Title I students.

Background

Frequent absence from school is detrimental to the growth and development of children in our country, especially those children who start school with lower-than-average skill levels (Gottfried & Ehrlich, 2018). In the United States, the public school system is designed around the assumption that students should attend school regularly in order to acquire knowledge; this postulation has been systemized in every state through strict attendance laws (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). In 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requiring schools to report the number of students missing an excessive number of days of school (Jordan, 2018). In recent years, more than 55,906 public schools in the United States received Title I funds as a result of having high percentages of children from low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). It is estimated that those Title I funds served more than 26

million students (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). With so many qualifying for federal funds based on their socioeconomic status, it becomes necessary to determine how this population of children are affected by various components of their environments.

When students are not present for school, they are denied the opportunity to learn in accordance with the instructional program of their school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Research has shown that attendance is a key factor in student achievement (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). It has been well documented that students who are chronically absent from school have lower grades and test scores than their peers who attend school on a regular basis (Gottfried, 2018; Gottfried, 2019). It is also widely known that students from low family socioeconomic backgrounds do not perform at the same level as students from more well-off communities (Destin et al., 2019; Liu et al, 2020; Gobena, 2018). There is little empirical research, however, that examines the effect of chronic absenteeism on students from low socioeconomic status (SES).

Students who are chronically absent from school are at risk of missing early learning milestones, dropping out of high school, and having poor outcomes later in life (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012); however, the research does not fully show if and how inconsistent school attendance impacts students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Students from low-income backgrounds are more likely to be chronically absent and suffer academically (Jordan, 2018), but more research is needed to determine the degree to which these students are impacted as compared to their peers who are from more economically secure homes. This study addresses this under-researched issue in more depth.

The social implications of chronic absenteeism cannot be overlooked. Poor school attendance is an indicator of whether or not a child will complete high school or drop out before

graduation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). More recent research by the U.S. Department of Education (2019) confirms this fact and even declares that irregular school attendance is linked to poor outcomes later in adulthood—ranging from poverty and weakened health to involvement in the criminal justice system. This section will provide a historical, social, and theoretical context surrounding the issue of chronic absenteeism as it relates to student achievement.

Historical Context

Chronic absenteeism is a pervasive problem in our nation, and its consequences can be detrimental (Gottfried & Gee, 2017). Absenteeism, however, is not a new issue—educators and local administrators have been concerned with this issue as early as the 19th century (Jacob & Lovett, 2017). This concern arose due to the fact that nearly one-fourth of juveniles incarcerated at the Chicago House of Correction in 1898 were there as a result of truancy (Jacob & Lovett, 2017). Chronic absenteeism has been a crisis in U.S. public schools that has not been fully comprehended (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). As a result of the Every Student Succeeds Act, states are currently mandated to report yearly attendance data (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). The U.S. Department of Education (2019) uses active data from the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) in an effort to reduce and eventually eradicate chronic absenteeism. This data is drawn from public schools with the understanding that chronic absenteeism has and continues to be a barrier that prevents some students from reaching their full potential (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). In recent years, the subject of chronic absenteeism has gained a lot of popularity, leading some states to even go as far as revising their Standards of Accreditation to include chronic absenteeism as a school quality indicator (Virginia Department of Education, 2019).

The most common definition of chronic absenteeism is missing 10 percent or more of school, regardless of reason, in a given academic year (Gottfried, 2019). With most school systems allotting 180 days of instruction for students, those who are chronically absent miss roughly 18 days. In the United States, it is estimated that between 5 and 7.5 million children are considered chronically absent each academic year (U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice, 2015). This figure equates to about 16 percent of the student population or 1 in every 6 students (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). The rate at which students are missing school is alarming because every day that a pupil misses school is a day of learning that is lost (Stiles, 2018). Development is at risk of being obstructed when children are not present in the school environment (Gently-Genitty et al., 2020). A report from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) (2017) asserts that excessive school absence has the potential to exacerbate the achievement gap due to the fact that students who are already faced with substantial academic challenges are disproportionately affected (Rafa, 2017).

Historically, schools in this nation have only tracked truancy, a count of a student's unexcused absences, or average daily attendance (Stiles, 2018; Healthy Schools Campaign, 2016). While truancy has been an issue in the United States since the introduction of enforced education and mandated attendance, it is not synonymous with chronic absenteeism (Healthy Schools Campaign, 2016). When schools focus on truancy and average daily attendance rates, individual student attendance data can be misleading. Chronically absent students are often overlooked in these instances because they are veiled behind average daily attendance data that focus on aggregate data and not individual student patterns (Healthy Schools Campaign, 2016).

The U.S. Department of Education has encouraged state administrators to create local policies that address chronic absenteeism rates and not truancy rates (Stiles, 2018).

A review of the literature shows a focus on the various causes of chronic absenteeism, the impact it has on student achievement, and some remedies for chronic absenteeism. On any given day, students are faced with adversities that hinder them from attending school regularly. Poverty, healthcare issues, neighborhood violence, and unstable family environments are a few of the variables that make it challenging for students to take advantage of the chance to learn at school (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). This study will add to scholarly research that shows how chronic absenteeism impacts student achievement—specifically those students who attend Title I schools. This, in turn, will lead to policies being created to combat the culprits of chronic absenteeism giving district and state leaders the empirical data that will support the cause of providing equitable and uninterrupted educational opportunities to students.

Social Context

Chronic absenteeism is a precursor to unfavorable outcomes in adolescence including school dropout, academic failure and juvenile delinquency (McCluskey et al., 2004). More recently, it has been proved that students who are chronically absent from school may fail to reach early learning milestones such as reading on grade level (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Consequently, those students who fail to read at grade level by the time they reach the fourth grade are four times more likely than their peers who read on grade level to drop out of high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Allison et al. (2017) also determined that regular school attendance is a strong predictor of school dropout—even more so than grades or standardized test scores. Allison et al. (2017) looked at the association between chronic absenteeism and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in school-age children. They found that

chronic absenteeism is more common among those children who witness violence in their neighborhood, live with a relative who abuses substances, or have multiple adverse childhood experiences. Students who have chronic absenteeism are at a higher risk for school dropout and negative health outcomes than their peers who attend school regularly. The results also showed that among the nearly 60,000 students in the sample, approximately 2,500 experienced chronic absenteeism. Exposure to adverse childhood experiences is associated with chronic school absenteeism, concluding a need for an interdisciplinary approach to combat this issue.

Gottfried (2015) considered the effect chronic absenteeism has on the achievement of classmates and found that in regards to reading and math test scores, students with chronically absent classmates suffered academically. Frequent absences are not only disadvantageous to the student missing school, but negatively impact the achievement of classmates (Gottfried, 2015). Students who miss school require additional remediation and re-teaching to get back on track. Consequently, the teacher spends valuable instructional time covering missed skills and ultimately takes time away from those who never missed class (Gottfried, 2015). This is an occurrence that is expected in the classroom, but in the case of chronically absent students, it happens more frequently. Not only does the absent student suffer, but the effects trickle down to their non-absent classmates. London et al. (2016, p.6) also conducted research on this "spillover" effect and found lowered test scores in both chronically absent students and their classmates.

Chronic absenteeism is most prevalent among individuals of low socioeconomic status, students of color, those with disabilities, and students enrolled in urban school divisions (Gottfried & Gee, 2017; Lara et al., 2018). There is often an overlap of certain variables such as poverty, ethnicity, and communities that tend to exacerbate the challenges faced by students and

educators (Lara et al., 2018). Children who are chronically absent from school are up to 7 times more likely to drop out of school than their peers who attend school regularly (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Taylor (2017) explained that those from under-resourced communities often get left behind. He stated, "the roads of higher education are littered with the corpses of low-income and other students who are ill-prepared for the rigors of higher education" (Taylor, 2017, para. 9). According to the United States Department of Labor (2017), academic achievement is a firm predictor of educational attainment, employment, and earning potential; however, schools situated in neighborhoods with less socio-economic resources tend to underperform in terms of academics (Ruiz et al., 2018).

There is a growing body of research that reveals the prevalence of chronic absenteeism and its significant role in achievement, but there is also a deficiency of studies investigating the impacts of attendance among various SES backgrounds on student achievement. It is known that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to miss school more than their peers, thus missing out on learning opportunities. However, the extent to which these absences impact their achievement has yet to be examined on a larger scale. These gaps in education translate into major differences in lifetime wealth accumulation, marriage rates, health outcomes, and an increased likelihood of incarceration (Lacoe, 2016). Identifying these policy-relevant factors that contribute to these gaps in education is crucial in eliminating these disparities later in life (Lacoe, 2016). Since the research indicates that success in school is a compelling indicator of accomplishments later in life, early discrepancies in academic achievement are prone to have lasting consequences for the "future trajectory of individual students" (Ruiz et al., 2018, p. 297).

Theoretical Framework

Abraham Maslow is a well-known humanistic theorist. He believed goal achievement directed human actions (Maslow, 1954). Maslow (1954) categorized needs into a hierarchy that is structured in a way that certain needs must be fulfilled before others can be addressed. At the base of the hierarchy are physiological needs—air, food, water, clothes, shelter, and rest. If these needs are not satisfied, the focus shifts to meeting these needs. At the next level are safety and security. This includes health needs, job and social security, and family. Once physiological and safety needs are met, belongingness to needs follow. Belongingness is comprised of friendship, intimate relationships, marriage, and volunteer work. The fourth level consists of self-esteem needs that include confidence, achievement, feelings of accomplishment, and esteem from others. Topping off the highest level of the hierarchy is the need for self-actualization. This is the point in which an individual becomes everything he is capable of becoming.

An understanding of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs can be applied to the achievement and learning of students. It is not possible for educators to meet all of the physiological needs of each student they are responsible for teaching. There are resources in place such as reduced and free lunch options, but unfortunately every physiological need of the learner cannot be addressed by the school. Maslow's (1954) model points out that a child cannot and will not focus on learning when these basic needs are not met. As a result of not having access to basic resources (food, shelter, clothes, etc.), students are at a heightened risk of not attending school and thus not receiving the necessary resources to reach self-actualization stage of Maslow's (1954) model. Chronic absenteeism is most prevalent among those individuals who live in poverty and come from families of low income (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). This affects the students in their childhood and likely will have effects on their adult lives.

Problem Statement

A number of factors have been identified that contribute to chronic absenteeism: ethnicity/race, socioeconomic status, community factors, and even the organizational makeup of schools (Lenhoff, & Pogodzinski, 2018). Individuals of color and those from low-income backgrounds experience higher rates of absenteeism due to systemic issues that will be identified in the next chapter. Regardless of the reason for student absence, the impact, however, has only very superficially been discussed. Although prior empirical data has identified an extensive range of the effects of chronic absenteeism on student achievement, there is a lack of specific studies that target the direct impact that socioeconomic status has on the achievement of chronically absent students. Some studies have been conducted that shed light on the affect chronic absenteeism has on academics, but gaps still exist that warrant more research on the topic—more specifically how this phenomenon impacts those coming from a low-income background (Allison et al., 2017; Gentle-Genitty et al., 2020; Gottfried, 2015; Gottfried, 2019; Gubbels et al., 2019). A recent study by Casado and colleagues (in press) specifically articulated the need for future studies that explore whether factors, such as SES, may contribute to student outcomes among those who are chronically absent. They found that in a Title I setting, chronic absenteeism did not significantly impact students' mathematics achievement (Casado et al., in press). As it appears, mixed results exist within recent research literature, warranting the need for more studies that examine the effect of SES on absenteeism and student achievement. A deeper dive into this issue will help stakeholders and policy makers put initiatives in place to ensure equitable access to education for all students.

Students who are chronically absent are not achieving at the same level as their peers their peers who attend school on a consistent basis—their academic performance worsens as they

miss more school (Garcia & Weiss, 2018). Ultimately, these students are put at a disadvantage later in life (McCluskey et al., 2004, U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Unfortunately, the effects of chronic absenteeism are not limited to the student who is absent—other pupils in the class feel the effects. A recent study by Gottfried (2019) indicated that teachers responding to the varying needs of absent students has a negative impact on the rest of the student in the class. Those absent students require additional time and assistance to recover from their absences which ultimately slows down the pace of instruction (Gottfried, 2019). While this phenomenon will apply to any degree of absence, with chronic absenteeism, the frequency is amplified. Chronic absenteeism is a growing trend and further research is needed to determine the degree to which it affects the academic performance of students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). The problem is the current literature has not fully addressed how or whether socioeconomic status impacts the achievement of students who are chronically absent from school.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative causal-comparative study is to determine if socioeconomic status influences the academic achievement of chronically absent students as measured by the Virginia SOLs. Chronic absenteeism is the point where students miss 10% of school, regardless of reason, in a single academic year (Gottfried, 2015). With normal school years spanning 180 days, students who are chronically absent miss approximately 18 days of school. The two independent variables for this study are absenteeism and school setting. The dependent variables are achievement on the 5^{th} grade 2019 mathematics, English, and science Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. The population for this study consists of chronically absent fifth grade students who attend public schools in the coastal region of Virginia. By

focusing on the topic of chronic absenteeism and student achievement, this study will seek to produce evidence-based research to inform school administrators when making policy decisions surrounding the influence of socioeconomic status.

Significance of the Study

While academic performance is often discussed in terms of chronic absenteeism, school attendance is also important because it may have implications of issues into adulthood. Regular school attendance is related to increased success in school and adulthood, so it is imperative to produce more conclusive research so that this issue can be combatted (McCluskey et al., 2004). Ansari et al. (2020) discuss how chronic absenteeism is linked to greater economic difficulties later in life. Standardized testing is one of the most trusted means of assessing student achievement. A study conducted by London et al. (2016) investigated chronic absence patterns and its ramifications on student achievement. It was found that those with numerous years of chronic absence had significantly less growth on the California Standards Test when compared to their peers who were never chronically absent (London et al., 2016). Dunlap (2016) conducted similar research using the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge and concluded that chronic absenteeism was both statistically significant in determining whether or not students scored satisfactory on the state standardized test. Although there is a large research base supporting the negative influence of chronic absenteeism on academic achievement (e.g., Gottfried, 2015; Gottfried, 2017; Gottfried, 2019; Gershenson, 2016, & London et al., 2016), the implications for different populations of students are often overlooked. Consequently, it is necessary to conduct further research to close the gaps and determine the degree to which students in a Title I setting are affected academically by chronic absenteeism. This study will seek to add to the body of knowledge on the influence of SES on the academic achievement of

chronically absent students. Additionally, this study will inform stakeholders of the data surrounding the issues of SES and student achievement in order to inform policy makers' decisions relating to the influence of chronic absenteeism on certain populations of students.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a difference in mathematics scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school?

RQ2: Is there a difference in English scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school?

RQ3: Is there a difference in science scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school?

Definitions

The terms that will be covered in this study include:

1. *Adverse Childhood Experiences* – Traumatic events in a child's adolescence that can be related to abuse, neglect, and/or household dysfunction (Allison et al., 2017).
2. *Average Daily Attendance* – The percentage of a students in a school that attend on a typical day. The definition is the same nationwide, but does not provide student-level data (Chang et al., 2014).
3. *Chronic Absence* – One measure of how many students miss a certain percentage or number of days, including excused and unexcused absences and suspensions.

Researchers often track 10 percent of the school year, but no common definition exists among states (Chang et al., 2014).

4. *Chronic Absenteeism* – Occurs when a child misses at least 10% (18 days or more) of a given academic year, regardless of reason (Gottfried, 2019).
5. *Economically Disadvantaged* – Students who are parts of households that meet income eligibility guidelines for free or reduced school breakfast and lunch (Virginia Department of Education School Quality Profiles, n.d.)
6. *Executive function* - The intellectual processes that regulate goal-directed behavior (Lawson et al., 2017).
7. *Exosystem* – The layer of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model that don't necessarily involve the child and are external to their involvements, but still indirectly impacts the child (Guy-Evans, 2020).
8. *Macrosystem* – The broadest level of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model and is the layer that is furthest from the student (Zhang, 2018).
9. *Mesosystem* – Interrelationships between different microsystems (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015).
10. *Microsystem* – The immediate relationships or organizations that a person interacts with (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015).
11. *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)* – rates student skill levels as basic, proficient, or advanced based on their performance on the tests (Chang et al., 2014).
12. *Poor Attendance in NAEP* – When a student is absent 3 or more days in the month before the test (Chang et al., 2014).

13. *School Climate* – The attitudes, norms, beliefs, values, and expectations that support school life and affect the measure to which members of the school community feel safe (Aldridge et al., 2018).
14. *Socioeconomic status (SES)* – an indication of one's overall social status in society (Vi, Xu, & Xia, 2020).
15. *Standards of Learning (SOL)* – In Virginia Public Schools, the Standards of Learning establish the minimum expectations for what a student should know and be able to perform at the end of a grade/course in English, mathematics, science, history/social science, and other subjects. The SOL assessments in each subject measure the success of students in meeting the state board's expectations for academic achievement (VDOE, 2021).
16. *Title I* – a classification of schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).
17. *Truancy* – A measure of how many students miss school with no excuse. The definition varies from state to state (Chang et al., 2014).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two contains an overview of the theories that frame this study and a review of the literature relevant to chronic absenteeism and student achievement. This chapter is composed of six main sections: (a) an overview, (b) the theoretical framework, (c) the related literature section, and (d) a summary. The impact that chronic absenteeism has on student achievement, as outlined in the existing body of literature, will be discussed in addition to the areas where a dearth in research exists. The variables associated with chronic absenteeism that have a bearing on student achievement will also be examined. Furthermore, those solutions that have been identified to increase a child's chance of attending school regularly and the impact socioeconomic status has on student achievement will all be reviewed in the context of existing literature. This research study will aim to investigate how, if at all, school setting impacts the academic achievement of students who are chronically absent.

Theoretical Framework

Maslow's (1954) theory of human motivation and Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bio-ecological model are the two theories that frame this study. Maslow's theory of motivation supplies a comprehensive conceptual justification of how multiple factors shape the growth and development of student from low-income backgrounds. Through an exploration of Abraham Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, a direct connection to the framework that will effectively guide this study will be established. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bio-ecological model will also allow the findings of this study to be situated within a greater context, thus establishing the significance of this study.

Theory of Human Motivation

Abraham Maslow was a psychologist who is known for his work dealing with humanistic theory. Maslow (1954) was a firm believer that goal achievement directed the actions of humans. At the heart of Maslow's theory of human motivation is his hierarchy of needs, which can be visualized as a pyramid. Maslow (1954) categorized human needs into a hierarchy. This hierarchy is a five-tier model that prioritizes human needs in a manner that certain needs must be fulfilled before others can be addressed. The elements in this hierarchy are divided into three categories: basic needs, psychological needs, and self-fulfillment needs. At the base are physiological needs. Water, food, air, shelter, rest, and clothes are all included in the physiological needs. At the next level are safety and security needs. After an individual's physiological needs have been fulfilled, the need for safety and security become relevant (McLeod, 2007). The longing for predictability and control in the lives of people can be fulfilled by family and society in the form of police protection, schools, and health care (McLeod, 2007). Once these basic categories of needs have been met, belongingness and love needs can be addressed. At the fourth level, esteem needs are found and include achievement, confidence, feelings of accomplishment, and esteem from others. At the top of the pyramid is the need for self-actualization. Self-actualization is achieved when individuals become all they are capable of becoming. Maslow (1954) suggests that the essential needs must be met before a person can reach their full potential at the self-actualization stage.

McLeod (2020) also shows that Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of human needs can be separated into two groups: deficiency needs and growth needs. The level of motivation of individuals will decrease as their deficiency needs are met (McLeod, 2020). However, as they achieve being or growth needs, motivation will increase (McLeod, 2020). According to Maslow

(1954), human motivation and behavior are influenced by the degree to which their needs are met.

Maslow's Theory of Motivation in Title I Settings

Socioeconomic status has been identified as one of the factors that limit student achievement (American Psychological Association, 2021). Students attending high-poverty urban schools are confronted with many obstacles to academic achievement that present challenges later in life (Lacoe, 2016). According to the American Psychological Association (2021), children who come from low-income families enter high school with literacy skills approximately 5 years behind those from high-income families.

Maslow's hierarchy of human needs consists of five stages—each of which is dependent on the satisfaction of the prior stage (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). Maslow proposed that people need their biological needs satisfied before they can seek any form of order and predictability within their lives and move toward an idyllic version of themselves (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020). Oftentimes, children born into poverty do not have access to what Maslow (1954) describes as basic human needs: food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, and sleep. Without these fundamental needs students cannot function properly and excel in their school environments which a determinant for success later in life.

Physiological needs. Physiological needs are at the base of the pyramid. Maslow (1954) classifies physiological needs as those biological requirements for basic human life. Air, food, water, shelter, clothing, warmth, and sleep are all considered physiological needs (Maslow, 1954). Children must have these essential needs met in order to focus in school, or else their attention is concentrated on meeting these physiological requirements (Kurt, 2021). It proves difficult for students to learn in overcrowded classrooms that are too hot or cold, or lack basic

resources (Lenz & Larmer, 2018). Many students in Title I settings are from low-income areas and face barriers in their education because of their impoverished conditions. Food insecurity, hunger, unstable living conditions, and unreliable transportation all contribute to chronic absenteeism (Robert wood Johnson Foundation, 2016). Schools classified as Title I are supplied with funding that provides breakfast, lunch, and other resources to students in low-income communities. It has been determined that participation in the USDA's National School Lunch Program (NSLP) reduces food insecurity (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2021). While some of the students' physiological needs are attended to while at school, when they return home, some children still don't have these basic needs.

Learning motivation involves the willingness of students to learn and engage in their academic courses (Li, et al., 2020). Consequently, motivation is a required factor for individual learning engagement (Li et al., 2020). When students lack the will to participate in their learning activities, they will not yield favorable academic outcomes (Li et al., 2020). In the case of Title I students, this lack of a will to participate is often the result of not having access to the most basic resources as outlined in Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs.

Safety needs. Once the primary physiological needs have been met, safety needs take precedence. Included in this tier are feelings of safety while at school and involvement of parents and community (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). Maslow identified a safe environment as a prerequisite for productive learning (Lacoe, 2016). The Office of Safe and Supportive Schools (OSSS) echo this point and declare that safe and supportive schools are central to the well-being of the entire school along with the academic success of children (Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2021). Lacoe (2016) highlighted the importance of safety and noted that order and safety in the school are fundamental to research dealing with essential educational

policies such as the achievement gap and student engagement and attendance. The U.S. Department of Education supplies school divisions and state departments of education with the means to create and promote positive school environments (Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2021). An understanding of the psychosocial aspects of the school environment is key in influencing the behavior of children (Aldridge et al., 2018).

Safety is a vital component of the school climate and encompasses social, emotional, physical, and intellectual safety (Ruiz et al, 2018). Safety is affiliated with a consistent enforcement of school discipline policies, accessibility to social support from concerned adults, a low threat of school violence, and less student and teacher victimization (Ruiz et al., 2018). Feelings of unsafety at school may lead to increased school absences (Lacoe, 2016). These absences are likely to have negative effects on students' grades. Lacoe (2016) determined that students who did not feel safe had a consistent negative correlation with math test scores. Those students who expressed feelings of safety performed better on that standardized math assessments (Lacoe, 2016). Students who live in underprivileged and unsafe neighborhoods are impacted in terms of their health and education (Laurito et al., 2019). If safety needs are not met at home or at school, students are unable to focus on their academics. Consequently, these students do not progress to the next level in Maslow's (1954) hierarchy.

Love and belongingness needs. After safety and physiological needs have been fulfilled, the next tier of needs deals with relations and involve those feelings of love and belongingness. Belongingness deals with the human emotion need for interpersonal relationships, connectedness, and inclusion (McLeod, 2020). Friendship, affection, confidence, acceptance, and affection are all examples of love and love and belongingness needs (McLeod, 2020). Past research has identified the strong impact of socioeconomic status on social isolation

from peers and on a sense of belonging in the community (Stewart et al., 2009). Socioeconomic status affects many dynamics of the family structure including stability (American Psychological Association, 2021). The American Psychological Association (2021) identified poverty as a reliable predictor of child abuse and neglect. Parents of low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have harsher parenting styles which is associated with higher levels of child aggression (Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017).

When children have inadequate social attachments at school and poor relationships at home, they may become withdrawn from school and possibly involved in gangs (Sonterblum, 2021). On the other hand, when children feel like they belong, they are more prone to making better grades and performing well in school (Allen, 2020). This sense of belonging is a vital factor in motivating students and how they cope and learn in their school environments (Allen, 2020). Positive attitudes towards academics are fostered when children feel like they belong (Allen, 2020). Unfortunately, poverty affects the social relationships of children. They have fewer friends at school and report more instances of feelings of isolation (Haanpaa et al., 2019). Poverty is linked to a lower sense of belonging, greater exposure to negative incidents, and more aggressive and less cooperative behavior at school (Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017).

Esteem needs. Esteem needs encompass the fourth level in Maslow's hierarchy and include self-worth, accomplishment, and respect (McLeod, 2020). This is when individuals have respect for themselves as well as respect for others. (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). This mutual respect eventually leads to higher self-efficacy and self-confidence (Zhao et al., 2021). The main component of evaluating oneself is self-esteem (Martin et al., 2021). Esteem is essential in the development of a person and influences many aspects of education including behavior and levels of engagement (Martin, et al., 2021). Self-esteem in adolescents has also been identified as a key

factor in improving academic achievement (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). One negative consequence of poverty in children is low self-esteem, and low self-esteem is a risk factor for poor academic achievement (Doi et al., 2019). It has been acknowledged that impoverished children are at a heightened risk for abuse and neglect (American Psychological Association, 2021). Children living in poverty are less likely to experience positive parenting. Because positive parenting directly impacts the self-esteem and academic achievement of children, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are at risk of not succeeding in school (Batool, 2020).

Self-actualization needs. At the highest level in Maslow's hierarchy are self-actualization needs. These needs refer to the realization of an individual's potential, self-fulfillment, and seeking personal growth (McLeod, 2020). This stage is theoretical in a sense that can mean many things for different people (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). Poverty does not affect all communities equally—children of color are disproportionately affected and are more likely than white children to face barriers to their ability to reach the self-actualization stage (Haider, 2021).

An understanding of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs can be applied to the achievement and learning of children in school (Burleson & Thoron, 2014). Although there are resources available to assist with the needs of students, educators are not able to address every physiological need students may have. Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation points out that children are not capable of focusing on learning when they have basic needs that are lacking. Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation may also facilitate an understanding of why some students in Title I setting struggle while others excel. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) note that chronic absenteeism is most prevalent among those who live in poverty and come from families

of low income. These students generally do not have access to the basic resources such as food, clothes, and shelter. As such, these students will likely never reach the self-actualization level of Maslow's (1954) model and will see effects well into adulthood. Maslow's (1943) needs hierarchy is one of several useful frameworks that can be used to rationalize human motivation and behavior.

Bio-ecological Model

Another theoretical framework that grounds this research into broader concepts is Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bio-ecological model of development. This model is a theory of educational psychology that analyzes the development of humans over a period of time. In this theory, Bronfenbrenner conceptualized the context in which human growth and development occurs as a set of four nested structures: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Eamon, 2001). The innermost layer is the microsystem. The microsystem consists of a person's human relationships, relational interactions, and their immediate surroundings. Relationships between a person and his family and schoolmates are included in the microsystem. The mesosystem is the next layer that surrounds the microsystem. The different interactions among the entities of the microsystem are included in the mesosystem. An example of the mesosystem would be parental involvement in a child's schooling having a positive influence on that child's academic competence through the valuing of academics (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). The exosystem indirectly effects a child's developmental outcome and is also the setting in which the child's is not an active participant (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). A parent who was laid off would be an example of an indirect effect because the abrupt financial strain would drastically impact the child's life. The macrosystem is the comprehensive layer that includes cultural and societal beliefs that impact development. The relationships within these

nested systems allow for examination of how different factors and variables within these systems influence each other and affects one's developmental outcomes (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). These four systems explain how changing environments affect growing humans.

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bio-ecological model details a child's development in the context of his environment and can show direct and indirect relationships among the environmental factors that play a role in the likelihood of a child regularly attending and excelling in school. Bronfenbrenner's model suggests that children grow and learn through their interpersonal interactions with their families, teachers, and classmates, and through the influence of their own personal traits (Taylor & Gebre, 2016). The social environments in which students reside also influence their development and behavior (Taylor & Gebre, 2016).

Process, person, context, and time (PPCT) variables are all factors presented in Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model that provide insight on how students learn and develop, the role of their individual characteristics, and role of their home and school environments in molding their learning (Taylor & Gebre, 2016). These four systems interact to influence the development of a child. In order to study the development of a child, it is necessary to not only look at the immediate environment of the child, but also at the role the larger environment plays (Guy-Evans, 2020).

Process refers to the fact that human growth and development "takes place as a result of *processes* consisting of complex, reciprocal interactions among" entities in one's immediate environment (Taylor & Gebre, 2016, p. 206). These basic interactions are nested in a larger context that significantly impacts development (Taylor & Gebre, 2016). These identified factors are directly related to school attendance patterns and socioeconomic status. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) specify force, resource, and demand characteristics as the three types of person

characteristics that influence interactions between and individual and their environment the most. Context refers to the immediate and more isolated environments in which a person is situated (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Time is the final construct in the PPCT model and is broken down into three different types: microtime, mesotime, and macrotime (Siraj & Huang, 2020).

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems model provides a useful framework for examining theories of the effects of economic deprivation on the socio-emotional and academic development of students (Eamon, 2001). The bio-ecological model is relevant when it comes to the development of economically disadvantaged children. The experiences of this population of students in the aforementioned ecological systems are likely to shape their unique educational experiences. An understanding of how these children function amid these layers offers insight into the interventions that will provide them with equitable access to education.

Policymakers and practitioners with interests in addressing the issue of chronic absenteeism in our nation's schools stand to benefit from applying Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological approach when planning for student learning. This approach allows for the development of intervention models that focus on addressing issues within each of the listed systems. From an ecological theoretical perspective, it is evident that the learning and development of a child is influenced by multiple sources that occur within and across various systems (Sheridan et al., 2019). Considering the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystemic interactions aids in the understanding of how these factors influence the academic and psychosocial development of students (Hoffman et al., 2020).

A Bio-ecological Model Approach to Chronic Absence and Student Achievement

Mounting evidence has been conducted on the topic of chronic absenteeism, but no general consensus exists as to which factors are most dominant in predicting chronic absenteeism

(Gottfried & Gee, 2017). This is partly because many of the variables that contribute to chronic absence have been researched in isolation from each other—there is no single, united "theoretically-driven research agenda that examines jointly multiple factors of chronic absenteeism" (Gottfried & Gee, 2017, p. 7). It is challenging to devise policies and practices related to the prevention of chronic absenteeism when there is a lack of research into the multifaceted issues that result in students missing excessive days from school. What the research has shown is that chronic absenteeism is disproportionately high amongst children from low-income households, children of color, and those residing in public housing (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2016). Low-income students are four times more likely to be chronically absent than their middle-class peers (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2016).

A look at chronic absenteeism and student achievement through Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bio-ecological model helps to conceptualize these issues into a framework that provides a more holistic view (Gottfried & Gee, 2017). Using the bio-ecological model proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1977), the myriad factors that contribute to chronic absenteeism can be envisioned in broader terms including (1) the student, (2) the student's surrounding contexts including family and SES, and the (3) relations that students have between those contexts (Gottfried & Gee, 2017). One focus of this study is to gain a better understanding of the effects of socioeconomic status on academic achievement. Bronfenbrenner's model is useful in framing an investigation of the extensive contextual risk factors that influence the lives of school-age children (Ruiz et al., 2018).

Microsystems

Any immediate relationships or organizations that a person interacts with are considered microsystems (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). Family, peers, school, and community all constitute

microsystems as they are the most immediate contexts in which a child resides (Taylor & Gebre, 2016). Eamon (2001) declares that within microsystems, proximal processes function to either facilitate or hinder development. Developmental outcomes, including academic performance, are influenced by interactions within microsystems (Eamon, 2001). The quality and make-up of interactions that children have at home and amongst their peers carries over and shapes their conduct and performance at school (Taylor & Gebre, 2016). Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory identifies the proximal processes of the microsystem as most influential in regards to the development of a child. Many of the existing theories concerning the socioemotional effects of poverty have concentrated on intimate processes within the family microsystem (Eamon, 2001).

Mesosystems

Interrelationships between different microsystems is what the mesosystem entails (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). An example of this would be parental involvement in their child's education positively influencing that child's academic proficiency through the child valuing of their education (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2016). Gottfried and Gee (2017) examined the mesosystem in terms of home-school connections and the degree to which families engage with their children's schools and concluded that these specific interactions are able to significantly decrease instances of chronic absenteeism. A study by Sheldon and Epstein (2004) found that family and community partnership routines are able to significantly decrease chronic absenteeism, even after a history of chronic absenteeism has been recorded. A more recent study by Cepada & Grepon (2020) yielded similar results. They deduced that low parental involvement in the middle school years equated to high absenteeism while an increase in parental involvement paralleled with a decrease in absenteeism (Cepada & Grepon, 2020).

Although absenteeism is affected by school characteristics and family processes, a holistic approach proved beneficial in improving attendance rates (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). Gubbels et al. (2019) acknowledge that chronic absenteeism is caused by multiple student, family, peer, and school factors, but they focused on identifying the most critical culprits in an attempt to close the gaps on this particular topic. It was determined that low parental involvement and ineffective family systems are significant contributing factors to school absenteeism (Gubbels et al., 2019). Economically disadvantaged students often have unstable home environments and parents who show little to no interest in their schooling. By identifying which population of children are at risk of being chronically absent from school, appropriate interventions can be put in place to ensure equitable access to school success.

Exosystems

The exosystem includes, "other specific social structures, both formal and informal, that do not themselves contain the developing person but impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings in which that person is found, and thereby influence" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). Within this layer are formal and informal social structures that do not contain, but indirectly impact the child. A child's neighborhood, parent's place of work, parent's friends, and the mass media are all examples of exosystems (Guy-Evans, 2020). These locations don't necessarily involve the child and are external to their involvements, but still have an effect on them (Guy-Evans, 2020). A common example would be happenings at a parent's place of employment that affects how the parent interacts with the child once at home. An illustration of exosystems affecting the development of a child could be a parent having a dispute at work and then coming home and taking that frustration out on the child (Guy-Evans, 2020). This has the potential to negatively impact the mental state of school-age children causing them to lose focus on their

academics. Other factors that may indirectly affect an individual are state regulations, local economics, federal orders, and local disasters (Johnson, 2008).

Macrosystems

The macrosystem is the broadest level and is the layer of the model that is furthest from the student (Zhang, 2018). Material resources, opportunity structures, traditions and lifestyles, and cultural practices are all components of the macrosystem (Eamon, 2001). A wealth of research exists linking socioeconomic status, a macrosystem concept, to the socioemotional state of a child (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). Children from low-income families currently make up a majority of the public school population (Williams et al., 2019). With such a high concentration of children who are economically challenged, it becomes necessary to identify how their development and achievement are impacted. The means by which economic deprivation affects the development of students are complex (Eamon, 2001). Children who are products of impoverished communities are faced with widespread inequalities as compared to their wealthier peers (Ruiz et al., 2018).

Although parents are considered microsystems for their children, they are impacted by socioeconomic circumstances (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). Parents from low-income backgrounds experience higher than average instances of parenting stress, psychological disturbances, and depression (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). The likelihood of these variables negatively impacting their children's educational experiences is high. Gilbert et al. (2017) conducted a study seeking to better understand the family-level processes of risks impacting the educational outcomes of Latino students. They concluded that connections exist between parental stress and the academic achievement of their children (Gilbert et al., 2017). A similar study determined that the perceived stress of parents affect the competence of their children and their academic

performance (Soltis et al., 2015). The effects of economic deprivation trickle down to numerous aspects of a child's life.

Related Literature

A number of direct and indirect factors have been identified that impact school attendance and ultimately influence student achievement. Therefore, studies have been conducted in several areas including teaching styles, learning environments, curriculum, and other aspects of the student in order to improve education and academic achievement (Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu, 2016). This section will focus on those dynamics that contribute to absenteeism and overall student achievement.

Aspects of the School Environment Related to Academic Achievement

For years, researchers have attempted to comprehend how different factors affect student achievement and engagement (Davis & Warner, 2015). School climate is a combination of the psychosocial school atmosphere and the inter-group relations that affect student learning and school functioning (Maxwell et al., 2017). A school's climate plays a crucial role in promoting positive student academic outcomes (Daily et al., 2019). The National School Climate Center (NSCC) (2007) broke school climate down to four subtopics: (1) safety and respect, (2) teaching and learning, (3) relationships, and (4) environment. If the intention is to improve student outcomes, it becomes necessary to identify those variables within the school environment that can be targeted to enhance academic performance (Gietz & McIntosh, 2014). School climate has been identified as a leading factor in rationalizing student learning and achievement (Maxwell et al., 2017). Research has shed light on the value of a positive school climate which has led to school districts incorporating various aspects of school climate in school evaluations (Ruiz et al., 2018). Despite the overwhelming evidence supporting the associations between positive school

climates and improvements in a child's academics and mental well-being, many schools still fail to display the components of ideal school climates (Aldridge et al., 2018). Teacher expectations, experiences with bullying, safety, and inclusion are all aspects of the school climate relevant to academic achievement and will be discussed in this context.

Teacher Expectations

Workman (2012) makes the declaration that the single most important in-school factor affecting student success are teachers. Smith et al. (2018) reported on the necessity of coordinated school efforts to create learning environments where high teacher expectations intertwine with stimulating tasks and the other supports needed to achieve student success. The idea that teacher expectations can influence the success of students has been embraced by parents, students, teachers, and policymakers (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2021). Wong (2005) declares that whatever expectations teachers have of their students will influence student achievement. High teacher expectations are associated with higher academic performance while low teacher expectations are linked to lower academic performance (Flanagan et al., 2020).

The reality is that the expectations educators have for their students varies based on the social status of their students. Auwarter and Aruguete (2012) examined 106 teachers from a rural public school division and found that teachers perceived students of lower socioeconomic backgrounds as having less promising futures than students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, and consequently developed negative attitudes towards this population of students. More recently, Boudreu (2020) reported on a quantitative examination of the relationship between bias and student outcomes and determined that teachers' implicit bias yield unequal student outcomes. These biases can stem from race, ethnicity, and social status. The contrasting

perceptions and attitudes educators possess for children of varying socioeconomic backgrounds are just one of the many variables that are associated with student achievement.

Bullying and Victimization

Bullying has grown to one of the most common problems in schools worldwide (Xiong et al., 2020). The first federal definition of bullying was publicized by The Centers for Disease Control and Department of Education in 2014 and includes these three basic components: (1) unwanted aggressive behavior, (2) a detected or apparent power imbalance, and (3) repeated or high possibility of repeated bullying behaviors (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). In the United States, approximately 20% of students between the ages of 12 and 18 have experienced bullying (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). This figure is alarmingly higher for students in grades 4 through 12—nearly 50% of this population experienced bullying within a given month and more that 70% report being a witness to the bullying of others (Barrington, 2021). These students have reported various actions taken against them ranging from being the focus of rumors and being insulted to being threatened and physically assaulted (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021).

With the prevalence of social media and other forms of digital technology, students have access to an abundance of content. Consequently, cyberbullying has evolved to a common form of bullying among school-age children. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place over digital devices like cellular phones, computers, and tablets (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). Some actions that are classified as cyberbullying include sending or publicizing negative and hurtful content about another person and humiliating someone by sharing private information online (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). Among those students who reported being victims of bullying at any point during the school

year, 15% were victims of cyberbullying (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). Both traditional and cyber bullying are significant issues and have negative outcomes for all involved (Eyuboglu et al., 2021).

Peer victimization is the act of being bullied or abused repeatedly and over a span of time by multiple students (Ladd et al., 2017). In their cross-sectional school-based study of 6202 middle and high school students, Eyuboglu et al. (2021) found that bullying victimization has been shown to be significantly associated with negative mental health outcomes. In recent years, there has been an increased focus on the association between instances of bullying and mental health issues (Eyuboglu et al., 2021). Although physical and mental health are often discussed in terms of bullying, there are other aspects of the child that is impacted by bullying.

Recent data show that the adverse effects of bullying also include fluctuating academic achievement, according to Gomes et al.'s (2020) cross-sectional investigation of 288 students from first to fourth grade. An estimated 160,000 students miss school on any given day because of the fear of being bullied by their classmates (Barrington, 2021). Missing school is not the only serious impact bullying has on a child's educational experience, evidence suggests that bullying also negatively influences academic performance (Barrington, 2021). A repeated-measures, multi-informant design was conducted by Ladd et al. (2017) and showed that peer victimization in any form disrupts students' mathematics achievement, especially during the early years of school. Children in the second grade who had been victimized showed significantly lower reading achievement than their non-bullied peers (Ladd et al., 2017). These findings illuminate how long-term bullying and victimization instances are related to student engagement and academic achievement (Ladd et al., 2017). The ramifications of bullying appear not to only impact students in the United States, Al-Raqqad et al's. (2017) study of 200 teachers

reported similar findings on students in Jordan. They indicated a statistically significant difference exists in the teachers' perspective of academic achievement for school bullying victims (Al-Raqqad et al., 2017).

Samara et al. (2021) argued that the underlying process and variables behind the adverse association of bullying and student academic performance are not well-understood. It becomes necessary to close these gaps in order to correctly identify all significant factors associated with unsatisfactory academic progress. Samara et al.'s (2021) meta-analysis of 257,247 children found that bullying victimization was negatively correlated to "cognitive-motivational factors" which results in poorer academic achievement (Samara et al., 2021, p.3). It has been reported that students who are underweight or wear old-fashioned clothing are often targets of bullies (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). Children who live in poverty may not have access to basic resources such as food or new or clean clothing, which may increase their risk of being victims of bullying at school. The data exists linking low academic achievement and bullying; however, the degree to which societal factors impact instances of bullying has yet to be determined (Aldridge et al., 2018; Al-Raqqad et al., 2017); Barrington, 2021; Gomes et al., 2020; Samara et al., 2021; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021; Xiong et al., 2020; Anonymous, 2017).

Community Safety

Over recent years, several studies have been conducted with the intention of assessing the role of community violence in explaining the relationship that exists between SES and student achievement. A study consisting of a sample of 297 Chicago public elementary schools assessing the role of community violence in explaining the association between student achievement and socio-economic status was conducted by Ruiz et al. (2018). They determined

that violent crimes facilitate the association between aspects of the neighborhood and elementary school academic achievement (Ruiz et al., 2018). They also identified safety as a key facet of school climate for encouraging academic achievement (Ruiz et al., 2018). When children experience greater instances of neighborhood violence, the school as a whole reports feeling unsafe, which leads to more disciplinary problems within the school (Burdick-Will, 2018).

Another issue is the potential for students who come from violent communities to influence their classmates' learning. Burdick-Will's (2018) longitudinal study that spanned eight years suggests that the longer students are exposed to peers from violent neighborhoods, the larger the cumulative effects. The research suggests that children who are exposed to violence have reduced academic achievement due to feelings of withdrawal from school (Ruiz et al., 2018). Community violence threatens a child's physical safety and psychological functions (Ruiz et al., 2018). Students who come from communities with scarce resources, as in the case of Title I students, are at risk of performing at levels lower than their peers who have access to more resources.

School Safety

Safety deals with whether or not a student feels safe while in and around the building and commuting to and from school (Ruiz et al., 2018). Social, emotional, physical, and intellectual safety all fall under the umbrella of school safety (Ruiz et al., 2018). In order for productive learning to take place, students must have a safe environment (Lacoe, 2016). Safety and order in schools are essential to studies of central educational policy topics including the student attendance and engagement (Lacoe, 2016). Gietz and McIntosh's (2014) study consisting of students in 969 elementary and 73 middle schools concluded that when students don't feel safe at school, higher rates of absenteeism and lower academic performance are usually reported—they

are more likely to skip classes or stay at home when they feel unsafe. When they do attend school, however, they are less likely than their peers to participate in classroom activities intended to expand their learning (Gietz & McIntosh, 2014). Increased school absences as a result of feeling unsafe at school is how a lack of school safety affects academic achievement (Lacoe, 2016). An unsafe feeling at school also limits a child's ability to focus on learning (Lacoe, 2016). These students may become disruptive in class, thus affecting their classmates' feelings of safety and ability to learn (Lacoe, 2016). Gottfried (2019) also provided evidence on how peers are negatively affected when they have classmates with high rates of absenteeism. Taking Maslow's hierarchy of needs—which only prioritizes air, food and water above safety—and the evidence that shows school or community violence affect's a child's ability to learn and perform into consideration, it can be concluded that feeling unsafe at school is associated with lower academic achievement (Lacoe, 2016). The direct and indirect relationships between school safety and academic attainment are relevant to this study.

Acceptance

School safety is not the only variable related to student attendance and academic achievement. Research has found that acceptance by peers and teachers is also correlated to student academic performance (Gietz & McIntosh, 2014). The importance of positive student-teacher relationships has been a topic of discussion amongst schools across the nation. According to a recent publication by Waterford (2019), when teacher build rapport with their students and establish themselves as mentors, they are able to combat chronic absenteeism. When students know their teachers are sincere and want them to succeed, they are motivated to attend class, which in turn improves both school engagement and academic achievement (Waterford, 2019). Peer acceptance is the extent to which children are liked by their peers

(Wentzel et al., 2021). While not often recognized as frequently as student-teacher relationships, acceptance from classmates has also been linked to favorable academic outcomes (Gietz & McIntosh, 2014). Wentzel et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analytic study and determined that peer social acceptance is significantly and positively related to academic achievement. A two-wave longitudinal study by Zhang et al. (2017) yielded similar results suggesting that a lack of peer acceptance may be a means through which shyness factored in poor academic achievement in early school years. As dictated by the research, acceptance of peers and teachers influences student academic achievement, but there is little data that shows if and how these factors specifically impact students in Title I settings.

The Role of Poverty in Student Achievement

Poverty is considered one of the most dominant indicators of academic achievement in our nation's schools (McKenzie, 2019). United States federal poverty guidelines vary by state and the number of persons in the family or household. The most recent data show that in 2018, approximately 45% of public school students in the United States under the age of 18 are eligible for free or reduce-price lunch based on being classified as living in poverty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). In the 2021 calendar year, a family of two adults and two children living in the continental United States fall in the poverty category if their annual income is lower than $26,500 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). The unfortunate truth is that while the percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds is increasing, so is the achievement gap between them and their more affluent peers (Williams et al., 2018). The impact of poverty is multifaceted because poor students usually attend school with other poor students and are served by schools in communities that don't have sufficient resources to support them (Alexander & Jang, 2018). It becomes necessary for educators to possess a knowledge of

the effects of poverty on both student behavior and their learning capacity (McKenzie, 2019). Decreased educational success is linked to low socioeconomic status (American Psychological Association, 2021).

The impact poverty has on the academic achievement of a child is not only extensive, but it starts early and extends through elementary and high school (Taylor, 2017). This population of impoverished children are five times more likely to drop out of school and 13 times less likely to graduate on time as compared to their peers from wealthier households (Taylor, 2017). Ruiz et al.'s (2018) study of 297 public elementary schools in Chicago found that lower socioeconomic status was associated with lower academic achievement. Academics are not the only concerns for students from low-income families. Students living in poverty are more likely to experience social and emotional challenges, long-term stressors, and cognitive deficits due to considerable changes in brain structure in areas associated with memory and emotion (McKenzie, 2019).

Impact of Chronic Absenteeism on Student Achievement

Although an overwhelming body of evidence-based research exists linking negative consequences of chronic absenteeism to student achievement, more work is needed to definitively determine the impact chronic absenteeism has on student academic progress (Center for Research in Education and Social Policy, 2018). Little research has focused on the specific effects of chronic absenteeism—most of the work conducted has focused on comparing students with various attendance rates, rather than examining the effects of missing excessive days of school (Gottfried, 2019). No abundance of empirical sources exist that "allow researchers to describe the incidence, trends over time, and other characteristics of absenteeism that would be helpful to policymakers and educators" (Garcia & Weiss, 2018, p. 2). These gaps reduce the

ability of policymakers to design appropriate interventions that may improve overall student performance (Garcia & Weiss, 2018). Consequently, additional research is needed on the topic of chronic absenteeism in order to support the policy conversations that focus on reducing chronic absenteeism in our nation's schools (Gottfried, 2019).

Absent students are not the only ones who are adversely affected by poor school attendance, regularly-attending classmates of chronically absent students are inadvertently affected by the absence of their peers. Gottfried (2015) took into consideration the effect chronic absenteeism has on the achievement of the students' peers and determined that students with chronically absent classmates suffered in their academics as well. Similarly, London et al.'s (2016) conducted longitudinal research on the spillover of the effects chronically absent students had on their peers and concluded that lower test scores were found in both the chronically absent student and their classmates. Dunlap (2016) notes that chronic absenteeism has the potential to not only affect teaching and learning for the individual, but for the class as a whole. Frequent absences negatively impact the achievement of classmates (Gottfried, 2015). When students miss school, they require additional re-teaching and remediation to get caught up. As a result, the teacher spends valuable instructional time covering those topics that were missed. This ultimately takes time away from those students who never missed class (Gottfried, 2014). This circumstance is expected in the classroom, but happens at a much higher rate when students are absent frequently. Chronic absenteeism not only puts the offenders at a disadvantage, but the impact has a ripple effect on their non-absent classmates (Gottfried, 2015).

Student achievement and performance are often discussed in the context of standardized tests. A common theme of schools across the United States is the use of standardized tests to compare the academic data of pupils. Standardized tests are objective and efficient when it

comes to measuring the knowledge, skills, and understanding of students (Walberg, 2012). Chronic absenteeism is a primary cause of lowered academic performance (Gottfried, 2009). Chronic absenteeism is a strong indicator of those students who may drop out of school before graduation (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012). A study conducted by the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice (2015) found that those with a history of chronic absence between the eighth and twelfth grade were over seven times more likely to drop out of school than their peers who attended school regularly. That same report also found that children were less likely to read on grade level by the third grade if they were chronically absent in preschool, kindergarten, or first grade (U.S. Departments of Education, 2015). However, more research is still needed to determine which variables are likely to impact student attendance and achievement.

Causes of Chronic Absenteeism

In general, regular school attendance is linked to increased success in school and into adulthood (Kearney et al., 2020). In order to combat chronic absenteeism, it is necessary to pinpoint the reasons why students miss school in the first place. There are certain environmental factors that have been identified that predispose a child to be chronically absent from school. Chronic absenteeism "is caused by a variety of issues, including chronic health conditions, housing instability, involvement with the juvenile justice system, and unsafe conditions in school" (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 4). People of color, those who have low socio-economic status, or those who have a disability have increased instances of chronic absence (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012). London et al. (2016) report that the highest rates of chronic absence are seen among those who are African American, Native American, Pacific Islander, or those diagnosed with a disability. Additionally, children who are homeless or live in public housing have higher

rates of chronic absenteeism (Bauer et al., 2014). Of all the identified factors, it is the low-income students who are at a heightened risk of being chronically absent from school (London et al., 2016).

Humm Patnode et al. (2018) and Gubbels (2019) acknowledge that chronic absenteeism involves any combination of child, family, peer, school, and community factors. Three categories were identified to address the various factors that impact attendance: barriers, aversion, and disengagement, (Humm et. al, 2018). Barriers are those factors that prevent a child from attending school (health, transportation, suspension, housing instability, etc.) Allison et al. (2017) examined the association between chronic absenteeism and adverse childhood experiences in children and found that rates were much higher among children who witnessed neighborhood violence, lived with someone who abused substances, or those who had multiple adverse childhood experiences. Adverse childhood experiences are defined as "traumatic events in childhood related to abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction" (Allison et al., 2017, p.1).

Adverse childhood experiences are similar to aversion factors in that they both have the ability to negatively impact a child's upbringing. Aversion factors are those that impact attendance because the child does not feel safe or that he belongs at the school (Humm Patnode et al., 2018). Gershenson (2016) analyzed longitudinal data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics on the relationship that exists between teacher quality and student absences and determined that there is a permanent component to teachers' effects on student absences. Disengagement includes those factors that influence a child's desire to attend school (Humm Patnode et al., 2018). Lack of frequent communication between families and schools is one factor that London et al. (2016) identified that can be classified as disengagement. Lenhoff and Pogodzinski (2018) conducted research that examined

whether the organizational effectiveness of a school had the ability to moderate external influences on chronic absenteeism. Using school-level results from the 5Essentials survey (Lenhoff & Pogodzinski, 2018), they determined that schools organized for effectiveness ultimately had lower occurrences of chronic absenteeism when compared to schools that were not organized for effectiveness. Insight on the causes of chronic absenteeism can help to eradicate this issue of non-attendance that plagues so many school-age children.

Solutions for Chronic Absenteeism

Although factors not related to school appear to have a substantial influence on attendance, schools have been instrumental in launching intervention efforts (Hamlin, 2020). Many school districts have resources in place to increase a child's likelihood of attending school regularly. Punitive actions towards the children and their families do little to help the overall problem so Chang and Jordan (2017) suggest involving the community in order to combat chronic absenteeism. In their research aimed at the role community involvement plays in combatting chronic absenteeism, Weinberger & Forbush (2018) concluded that in addition to school administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and guardians, mentors play a pivotal role in reducing chronic absenteeism. Lenhoff & Pogodzinski (2018) note that schools with have stronger community-school ties experience lower levels of student absenteeism. According to the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice (2015),

> Research and experience demonstrate that several actions can help mobilize the kind of awareness, commitment to action, and community-based coalitions that are necessary to ensure every student who is, or is at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school receives the necessary support to maintain regular school attendance (U.S. Departments

of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice, 2015, p. 5).

The availability of public transportation also has the potential to reduce absenteeism. School transportation methods reduce student absences particularly in areas where families do not have their own vehicles (Lenhoff & Pogodzinski, 2018). Along those same lines, Gottfried (2017) also reviewed the findings of his research to definitively say that those kindergartners who used the bus to get to school had fewer absences than their peers, which ultimately made them less likely to be chronically absent from school.

There are other factors that have been shown to improve attendance and reduce the occurrence of chronically absent students. Later school start times have been linked to improved attendance and less tardiness in students (Wheaton, Chapman, & Croft, 2016). Behavioral and parental interventions also proved to be effective in the fight against chronic absenteeism (Maynard, 2010). What remains, though, is that simply pointing out the fact that chronic absenteeism is an issue is not enough. A thorough understanding of this topic will lead to the research and implementation of solutions—solutions that will work to reduce the negative impact that chronic absenteeism has on school-age children.

Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement

Children who are raised in deprived communities are met with widespread and systemic disparities when compared to their more affluent peers (Ruiz et al., 2018). These socioeconomic inequalities spill over to the school setting (Ruiz et al., 2018). Socioeconomic status refers to the indication of a person's overall status in society and is usually assessed alongside education, professional status, and income (Li et al., 2020). The American Psychological Association (2021) echoes this point and notes that educational attainment is encompassed with one's

socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is one of the best predictors of a child's educational achievement (Krapohl & Plomin, 2016). Executive function, the intellectual processes that regulate goal-directed behavior, can also be predicted by the socioeconomic status of a child (Lawson, Hook, & Farah, 2017). Poor cognitive function, language development, memory, and socioemotional procession are all linked to low socioeconomic status (American Psychological Association, 2021).

Sirin's (2005) meta-analytic review concluded that the parents' location in the socioeconomic range has a strong impact on students' academic achievement. Schools classified as Title I are those with a majority of the students who come from families with low income (Us. Department of Education, 2018). Research suggests that students who reside in low-income households and communities develop academic skills at a slower rate than their peers who come from higher socioeconomic status (SES) groups (American Psychological Association, 2021). Since this population of students is already at risk, it becomes necessary to see the degree to which chronic absenteeism impacts their achievement as well.

The impact socioeconomic status has on academic achievement has more to deal with school conditions as opposed to the home environment (American Psychological Association, 2021). Gimbert et al.'s (2007) mixed-methods comparative design study found that student achievement is correlated with both the teacher's years of experience and quality of the training the teacher received. A similar study by Polly et.al (2018) determined, using descriptive statistics and multivariate analyses of variance of 300 teachers and 5300 students, that teachers who engaged in targeted professional development had more students who achieved higher when compared to students of teachers who did not use the provided knowledge as frequently. The issue is that children in Title I or other low-income settings are not as likely to have highly-

qualified teachers who have access to resources that impact student learning in a positive manner (Clotfelter et al., 2006). Oftentimes, variables affecting student achievement are only thought of as external, but the fact remains that educators can do more harm than good to their students if not fully equipped for their roles. Some means of improving teacher and school quality include: focusing on the teacher's ability to teach effectively, strengthening leadership, creating an environment full of information beneficial for learning, sustaining a positive school culture, providing continuous professional development, and seeking support from external resources (Mujis et al., 2010). Leaders at the state, division, and school levels must all ensure the variable which they can control are done so in a manner that gives students equitable opportunities to succeed.

Socioeconomic Status and Family Resources

Literacy gaps in children from varying socioeconomic backgrounds exist and are evident before a child even begins school (American Psychological Association, 2021). As a result of lacking the language needed to help them access and understand math, language arts, history, and science, many children struggle with content-area reading and writing in these core-area subjects (Johnson, 2021). Bergen et al.'s (2016) study on 101 mother/father/child triads found that the basic reading skill of a child is related to several components of the home literacy environment. Data collected by Myrtil et al. (2019) from caregivers of 466 preschool-aged rural children examined the extent to which parent-child interactions, child interest, library use, and access to books of low-income families predicted literacy skills. Since low-income households have less access to appropriate learning materials, those students often do not have the resources that create positive literacy environments (American Psychological Association, 2021). A recent study found that the disparities that exist in emergent literacy development between SES groups

correlate with future academic disparities (Crosh et al., 2019). Teachers must monitor the varying needs of their students when it comes to language acquisition and must provide learning experiences that support advance literacy development (Roessingh, 2020). Children's language and literacy achievement is a goal of educators, and it becomes their responsibility to ensure these learning opportunities when the resources aren't readily available in the child's home environment.

Socioeconomic Status and Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the capacity perceived by a person to successfully implement one's behavior (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is also linked to determination and perseverance as it helps individuals overcome obstacles that may prevent them from using those instinctive abilities to achieve their goals (Lopez-Garrido, 2020). Shin and Lee (2018) define career decision self-efficacy as someone's confidence of participating in tasks related to making career choices and successfully committing to a career. Bandura (1977) postulates that people develop their self-efficacy beliefs from an interpretation of information from four primary sources of influence: performance experiences, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and emotional and physiological states. A person's motivation to control their own environment is one of the most commanding resources of self-efficacy (Shin & Lee, 2018). Those perceiving their career-related performance outcome as successful strengthen their career decision self-efficacy. On the other hand, those who perceive their performance outcome as a failure will more than likely have their career decision self-efficacy inhibited (Shin & Lee, 2018). Students who struggle and perform poorly in school are more likely than their peers to consider school and learning as a source of stress, manifesting in reduced self-efficacy, motivation, and engagement with school (Gunn, 2022).

The literature related to the impact socioeconomic status on career aspirations is not conclusive. Shin and Lee (2018) conducted multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) and found that socioeconomic status was not a significant contributor to college students' career decision self-efficacy. Similarly, Abdinoor's (2020) research using the Career Inventory Attitude scale (CMI-AS) and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE) indicated an absence of impact of SES status when it came to career choice and self-efficacy. On the other hand, Seyedi-Andi et al.'s (2019) cross-sectional study on 350 students found that certain socioeconomic variables, family income included, are significantly related to a child's self-efficacy. Although the literature was not definitive, it was clear that by providing academic interventions that focus on the students' role in various career fields, both self-efficacy and self-confidence can be improved (Sevedi-Andi et al., 2019). Both demographic and socioeconomic variables should be considered when addressing the needs of the whole student. These gaps in research warrant the need for more studies that determine how socioeconomic status impacts an individual's self-efficacy—specifically those individuals who come from at-risk environments.

Socioemotional Factors

Social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to the process by which individuals acquire and efficiently apply the knowledge, thoughts, and skills necessary to succeed in school, establish healthy relationships, and excel in the workforce (Wings, 2022). There are five components of social-emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Green et al.; Gunn, 2022; Hoffman et al., 2020; Ross et al., 2019). Self-awareness is the capability of individuals to understand and accurately consider their thoughts, emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and attitudes (Ross et al., 2019). The ability to regulate thoughts and actions in different situations and the ability to self-

motivate, manage stress, and attain goals are all components of self-management (Ross et al., 2019). Social awareness refers to one's ability to empathize with others and treat them with fairness (The Five Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Core Competencies, 2020). The abilities to develop and maintain mutually valuable associations through cooperation, communication, and kindness are relationship skills (Ross et al., 2019). Responsible decision-making is when a person is able to consider ethics, safety, society, and consequences when it comes to making healthy decisions about behaviors and relationships (Greenberg et al., 2017).

It is well documented that school curriculum, school policy, and socioeconomic status all impact learning; however, evidence has emerged in recent years supporting the role of social-emotional learning in a promoting a positive school environment (Daily et al., 2019). Although this notion is shared by researchers, little is known about the theorized means through which social and emotional learning leads to improved academic success (Panayiotou et al., 2019). The educator's role in social-emotional development can't be ignored. McKenzie (2019) identifies nurturing strong relationships between students and their teachers as the first and best strategy for increasing student effort and motivation. Gunn (2022) deduced that when it comes to students who are at-risk, including those who are from impoverished communities, getting SEL training at school makes an impact when it comes to preparing for a healthy and successful life outside of the school walls. Li et al. (2020) suggest that interventions that target self-concept may possibly improve children's academic achievement in school. By developing programs that exemplify respect, embed social skills, and promote inclusion in the classroom, schools can close the achievement gap for those students experiencing social and emotional challenges (McKenzie, 2019). SEL programs have the ability to play a fundamental role in improving school climate,

particularly in schools where there are diverse student populations, thus reducing instances of chronic absence (Reduce Chronic Absenteeism with SEL, 2022).

Summary

The body of literature within this review supports the claim that chronic absenteeism is a growing issue in our nation. Chronic absenteeism increases the achievement gaps at all school levels and has implications for individuals later in life (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; McCluskey et al., 2004, U.S. Department of Education, 2019). With such a high percentage of children living in impoverished conditions and given that those who experience poverty are more likely to miss school, it becomes necessary to examine how they are impacted by missing school in high concentrations. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) purport that while regular school attendance is important for all students, it is especially important for those individuals who are reared in poverty.

There are several learning theories that can be applied to understanding chronic absenteeism from different perspectives. The two theories that framed this study are Abraham Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation and Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bio-ecological model. In short, Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation provided an understanding of why some students from low socioeconomic backgrounds fail while some flourish. Individuals who don't have their basic physiological and safety needs met, as is the case of many from low-income communities, are unable to focus on learning at school and tend to perform lower than their peers who are more economically well off. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bio-ecological model explains how children learn and grow through a combination of interactions with their families, peers, and communities. These factors provide an understanding of attendance patterns and

achievement levels of students of low socioeconomic status. The theoretical framework of this review will allow the findings of this study to be situated within a greater context.

While schools have historically tracked truancy and average daily attendance data, more emphasis has been placed on chronic absenteeism data by departments of education across the United States. Chronic absenteeism is a widespread issue affecting millions of students each year. Missing school is related to negative academic and social outcomes. Whether or not a child will read on grade level, drop out of high school before graduation, abuse substances in the future, or have a record in the criminal justice system can all be predicted by school attendance data, according to the research literature. This review identified and detailed some of the risk factors and predictors of chronic absenteeism: socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, disability status, public transportation availability, and a variety of family and community factors. Studies have shown how community involvement, mentorship programs, family-school ties, and availability of public transportation can decrease the rate at which a student is absent from school, but as it stands, additional research is needed to identify methods that are able to completely eradicate this issue. Chronic absenteeism is a topic that has gained a lot of attention in recent years because of the implications it has on a child's present and future performance. Research completed on this epidemic suggests a negative impact on student achievement, but much more is needed to identify all the effects chronic absenteeism has on vulnerable populations of students.

Students who attend school regularly are presented with more opportunities for learning than their chronically absent peers. Research proves that chronic absenteeism not only impacts the absent student, but has the potential to negatively impact their classmates as well. What needs to be further researched is the degree to which the students of varying socioeconomic

backgrounds who miss school are affected. There are many factors that contribute to children missing school—socio-economic status, race, home dynamics, community factors, etc.—but regardless of reason, the impact is still felt. This literature review focused on the theoretical framework, the causes of chronic absenteeism, the impact it has on student achievement, possible solutions, and the impact socioeconomic status has on student learning. In conclusion, more research is needed in order to definitively explain the impact chronic absenteeism has on student learning—especially the learning of those students who come from low-income backgrounds.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This quantitative study seeks to determine if there is a relationship between socioeconomic status and student achievement of chronically absent fifth grade students in Title I schools and non-Title I schools as determined by the 2019 Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) math, English, and science assessment results. This study adds to existing literature and provides policy makers, school and division leaders with data to influence policies that pertain to student attendance, methods of instructional delivery, and additional resources for students and their families. This chapter describes the methods that will be used in this study. Included in this chapter are sections that address the research design, research questions, hypotheses, participants and settings, instrumentation, procedures, and an analysis of the data.

Design

A quantitative, causal-comparative research design was used to examine, analyze, and compare standardized mathematics, English, and science test scores along with absenteeism rates of fifth grade students attending title I and non-Title I schools in the Hampton Roads metropolitan area of Virginia. This type of non-experimental investigation is suitable when the goals is to identify cause and effect relationships (Gall et al., 2007). The independent variables are absenteeism and school setting. The dependent variables are academic achievement as measured by the fifth grade 2019 mathematics, English, and science Virginia SOL assessments. With the intent of determining if the independent variables will affect the dependent variables, an ex post facto research is fitting (Salkind, 2010). This research design is appropriate when determining whether a difference exists between independent and dependent variables after an

event has already occurred (Salkind, 2010). In ex post facto research, there is no manipulation of the independent variable by the researcher (Gall et al., 2007).

The 2018-2019 school year data was used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the student achievement of chronically absent and non-chronically absent fifth grade students in Title I and non-Title I locations. Statistical analysis was used to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists in students' standardized test scores based on the type of school in which they are enrolled.

Research Questions

The following research questions are considered in this study:

RQ1: Is there a difference in mathematics scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school?

RQ2: Is there a difference in English scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school?

RQ3: Is there a difference in science scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school?

Hypothesis

The null hypotheses for this study are:

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant difference in mathematics scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school.

H_{02}: There is no statistically significant difference in English scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school.

$H_{0}3$: There is no statistically significant difference in science scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school.

Participants and Setting

The cases for this study were drawn from a convenience sample of elementary students who attended 19 public schools located in a school district in the coastal region of Virginia during the spring semester of the 2018-2019 school year. The 2018-2019 school year was chosen because it was the last year the SOL assessment was administered prior to the Covid-19 pandemic changing the course of standardized testing in Virginia. At the time of the study, the school district consisted of approximately 40,898 students. Of the 40,898 students 47.2% were White, 32.4% were Black, 9.7% were Hispanic, 7.4% were multiple races, 2.8% were Asian, 0.3% were American Indian, and 0.2% were Native Hawaiian. For the 2018-2019 school year, 6.9% (2,755) students were chronically absent. This study was conducted in a school district that has 19 elementary and intermediate schools. Eight of these schools are Title I schools with at least 40 percent of the students qualifying to receive free or reduced lunch. Fifth grade students from both Title I and non-Title I schools in this division was the population selected for this study.

The Virginia Department of Education (2021) defines economically disadvantaged as a student who meets at least one of the following criteria: 1) is eligible for Free/Reduced Meals, 2) receives temporary assistance for needy families (TANF), or 3) is eligible for Medicaid. The

economically disadvantaged students made up of 34.6% of the total student population. Of the economically disadvantaged population, 11.8% (1,724) students missed 10% or more of the school year.

Ex post facto data was collected from the 2018-2019 school year to analyze the following factors: annual mathematic achievement scaled scores, annual English achievement scaled scores, annual science achievement scaled scores, and attendance records with the number of days absent for the school year. The researcher included 150 students in the sample population in order to exceed the required minimum of 66 students for a medium effect size and a statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha level (Gall et al., 2007). Convenience sampling does not involve a defined population, but the participants are chosen based on availability (Gall et al., 2007). The population for this study consists of elementary students in Title I and non-Title I school settings in the coastal region of Virginia.

Within each school, students were selected from fifth grade math, English, and science courses. The rationale for selecting fifth grade students is twofold. First, the largest shift in K-12 education is the transition a student makes from elementary school to middle school (Evans et al., 2018; Wolpert-Gawron, 2017). Students attending public schools in Virginia make the transition from elementary to middle school following the completion of fifth grade. The second justification for selecting this population of students is because fifth grade is one of the few grades in the state of Virginia where students are assessed for three of the four core content areas via the math, English, and science SOLs.

Aggregate data from the division show that for the 2018-2019 school year, 78% of fifth grade students passed the state reading test. For the economically disadvantaged population, 68% of fifth graders passed the reading test. Eighty-five percent of fifth graders passed the fifth

grade mathematics assessment, while only 77% of economically disadvantaged students passed. For the science assessment, 80% of students passed the fifth grade assessment and only 67% of the economically disadvantaged population passed this end of course assessment.

Instrumentation

The study utilized archival data generated from the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, the state-mandated assessment used for end-of-course mastery and Synergy Student Information System, the software that records, tracks, and manages student attendance data.

Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessment

The SOL assessment is used in Virginia Public Schools to establish the basic expectations for what a student should know and be able to do at the end of a course in English, mathematics, science, history, and other subjects (VDOE, 2021). This instrument has been used in previous studies (see Fulmer & Polikoff, 2014; Blowe & Prince, 2012, Stronge et al., 2007). The instrument consists of various questions that are presented in a randomized computer adaptive test (CAT) format that is customized for every student depending on how the student answers the test questions (VDOE, 2021). The total possible score on the mathematics, English, and science assessments is 600. Student performance is reported as one of three achievement levels: pass/advanced (a scaled score of 500 to 600), pass/proficient (a scaled score of 400 to 499), fail/basic, fail/below basic, or fail/does not meet. The performance level descriptors (PLD) for each SOL assessment express the skills and knowledge associated with each of the above-mentioned achievement level (Virginia Department of Education, 2021).

The Virginia SOL test is the state-mandated assessment for measuring student academic achievement. As previously noted, it has been used in previous studies examining student achievement in various contexts. The SOL tests are created through an extensive review process

and the field testing ensures fairness and appropriateness for the subject being tested. Teachers, administrators, and content specialists are all on the committees that review and develop test items (Virginia Department of Education, 2021). Those individuals involved in this process have to meet certain criteria: subject area expertise, thorough knowledge of the Standards of Learning, and experience with students with various learning styles and needs (Virginia Department of Education, 2021). It is ultimately the responsibility of this committee to recommend whether or not items will be included on the assessment. The tests, therefore, are considered valid.

According to the Virginia Department of Education (2021), the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests meet the procedural validity criterion as well as the technical requirements for reliability of scores. Cronbach's alpha coefficient, a basic estimate of internal consistency reliability, is widely used for calculating reliability (Gall et al., 2007). For tests administered using CAT, as in the case of the assessments used in this study, coefficient alpha cannot be applied because each student takes a unique test (Virginia Department of Education, 2021). For these assessments, a method by Thissen (1990) was used to estimate test reliability (Virginia Department of Education, 2021).

Procedures

The researcher contacted the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to secure permission to conduct this study using ex post facto data that has been archived in the school division's statistical database system. Once IRB approval was granted, the researcher sent a letter to the senior leadership team of the school division in order to request permission to conduct the proposed study and gain access to the archival data. The district's Office of Assessment and Accountability was contacted for specific requests for student data from the 2018-2019 school

year. Information about the fifth graders' aggregate days present, aggregate days absent, SOL scores for math, English, and science, and membership in any subgroup was generated.

In order to maintain confidentiality as outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), student names from each school were stripped from information and expressed only through researcher-assigned student identification numbers. With the purpose of streamlining information and increasing efficiency during the data analysis process, a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was generated with all of the data files. All data obtained was backed up to a password protected external hard drive and locked in a file cabinet by the researcher. The data will be retained for a period of five years after the completion of this research study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 was used to analyze data and examine the relationships of chronically absent students with academic achievement as recorded on the aforementioned Virginia SOL assessments. Summaries and results of the data is presented in Chapter 4. All procedural material is included in the appendices.

Data Analysis

As previously stated, the research design for this study is causal-comparative (ex-post facto). Conducting an exploratory data analysis and computing descriptive statistics for each comparison group is the first step in analyzing causal-comparative data (Gall et al., 2007). To analyze the data to determine if statistically significant differences exist in the achievement of chronically absent and non-chronically absent students in Title I and non-Title I settings, three two-way analysis of variances (ANOVAS) were conducted. Warner (2013) suggests using an ANOVA when researchers seek to compare the mean scores of a dependent variable across multiple groups. Achievement on the 5^{th} grade 2019 mathematics, English, and science Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments have been identified as the dependent variables for

this study. ANOVA also allows the researcher the opportunity to compare subgroups that differ on more than one factor. (Gall et al., 2007).

Assumption testing was conducted prior to analysis of the data in order to screen for possible issues. The assumptions, that were determined through assessment of various analytical methods, are normality, identifying extreme outliers, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Data screening was performed on each group's dependent variables (achievement on the 5th grade 2019 mathematics, English, and science Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments) regarding inconsistencies and outliers. Boxplots were used to identify outliers involving the identified dependent variables. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to verify the assumptions of normality. Due to the sample size being greater than 50, Kolmogorov Smirnov was used instead of Shapiro-Wilk. Error variance, also referred to as homogeneity of variance was tested using Levene's test. In order to determine the assumptions of linearity and homogeneity of variance, a scatterplot was created using Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Next, a test of the statistical significance of the difference between group centroids was conducted. According to Gall et al. (2007), Wilk's lambda (λ) is most commonly used for this purpose. Once an *F* value had been generated from the Wilk's lambda (λ), it was be looked up in an *F* ratio table to determine its level of statistical significance. The null hypotheses will be rejected at the 95% confidence level.

The purpose of this causal-comparative study is to determine the impact of chronic absenteeism on students from low socioeconomic backgrounds among a representative sample of fifth grade students attending public Title I schools in the mid-Atlantic region of Virginia. In the next section, the research findings will be presented. The results from each tested hypothesis will also be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative causal-comparative study was to examine the possible effects of absenteeism and socioeconomic status on the academic achievement of students as measured by the Virginia SOLs. In this study, attendance and school type data were collected from 5th grade students. This study used end-of-year math, English, and science SOL data for chronically absent and non-chronically absent students attending Title I and non-Title I schools. Three two-way ANOVAS were used to determine if statistically significant differences exist in students' standardized scores based on attendance and the type of school in which they were enrolled. In this chapter, the research questions and null hypotheses are reviewed. Also, the descriptive statistics and assumptions are reported. Their analyses determine whether to reject or fail to reject the null hypotheses.

Research Questions

The following research questions are examined in this study:

RQ1: Is there a difference in mathematics scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school?

RQ2: Is there a difference in English scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school?

RQ3: Is there a difference in science scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school?

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this study are the following:

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant difference in mathematics scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school.

H_{02}: There is no statistically significant difference in English scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school.

$H_0$3: There is no statistically significant difference in science scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school.

Data Screening

The data were reviewed for missing student scores in any of the three subjects (math, English, or science) and no responses were excluded from this study. After the data screening was completed, the scores and attendance data of 170 students were used in the analysis (n = 170).

Box and whisker plots were used to conduct data screening on each group's dependent variables (academic achievement as measured by the fifth grade 2019 mathematics, English, and science Virginia SOL assessments). The researcher sorted the data on each variable and scanned for inconsistencies. No data errors, inconsistencies, or extreme outliers were identified. See Figures 1, 2, and 3 for box and whisker plots.

Figure 1

Box and Whisker Plot for School Setting and Attendance for Math SOL

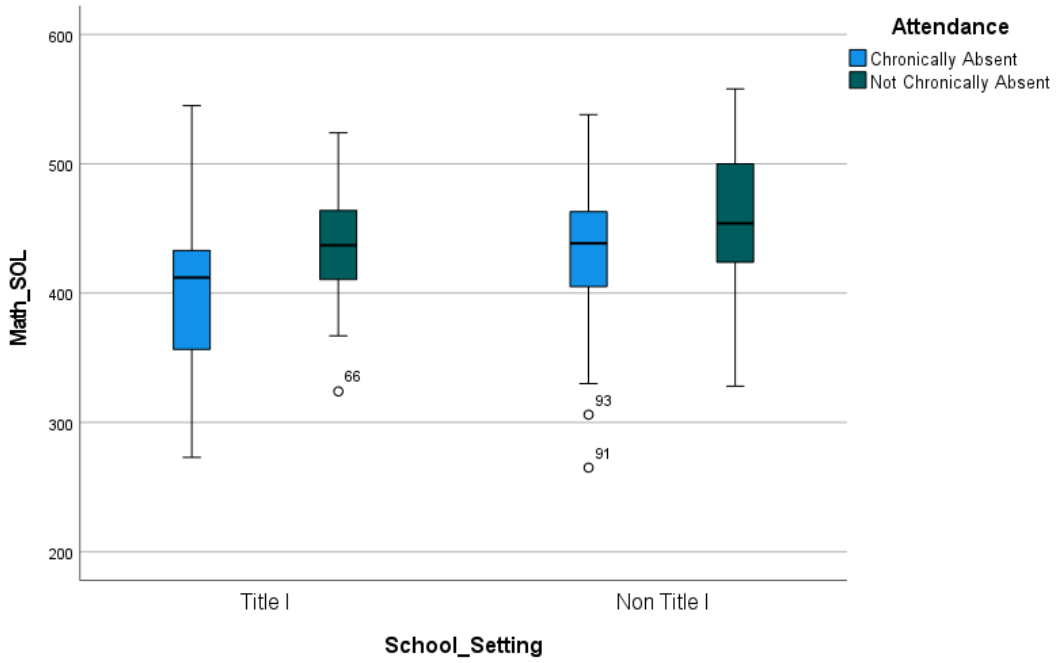


Figure 2

Box and Whisker Plot for School Setting and Attendance for English SOL

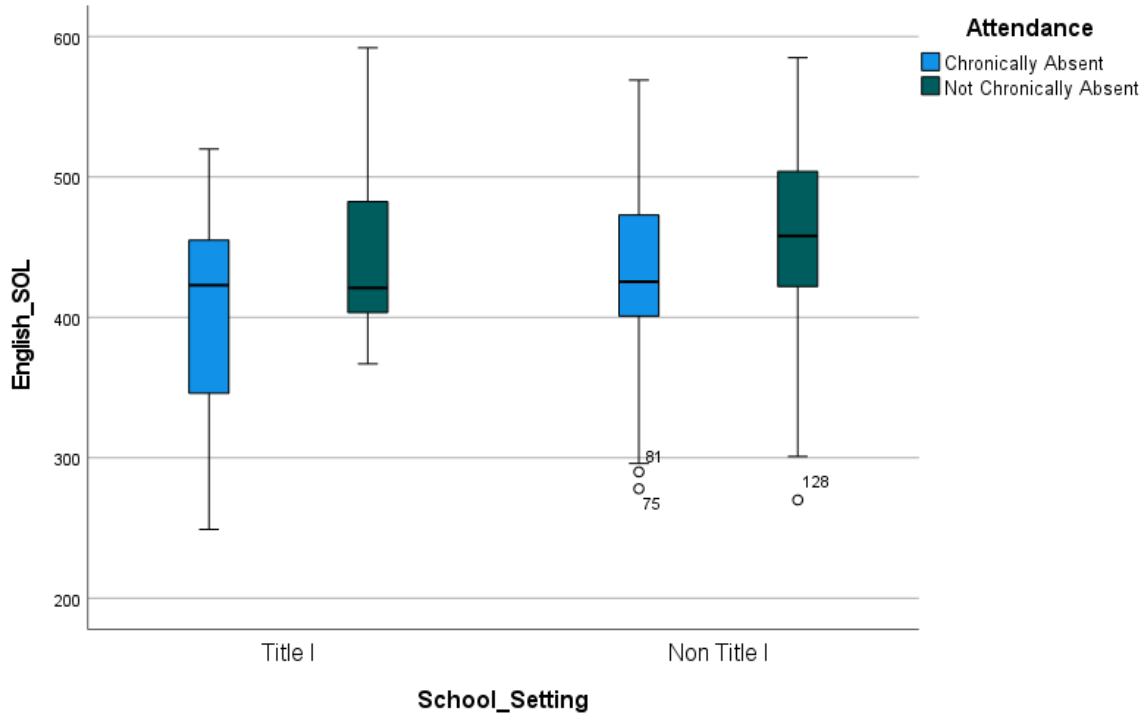
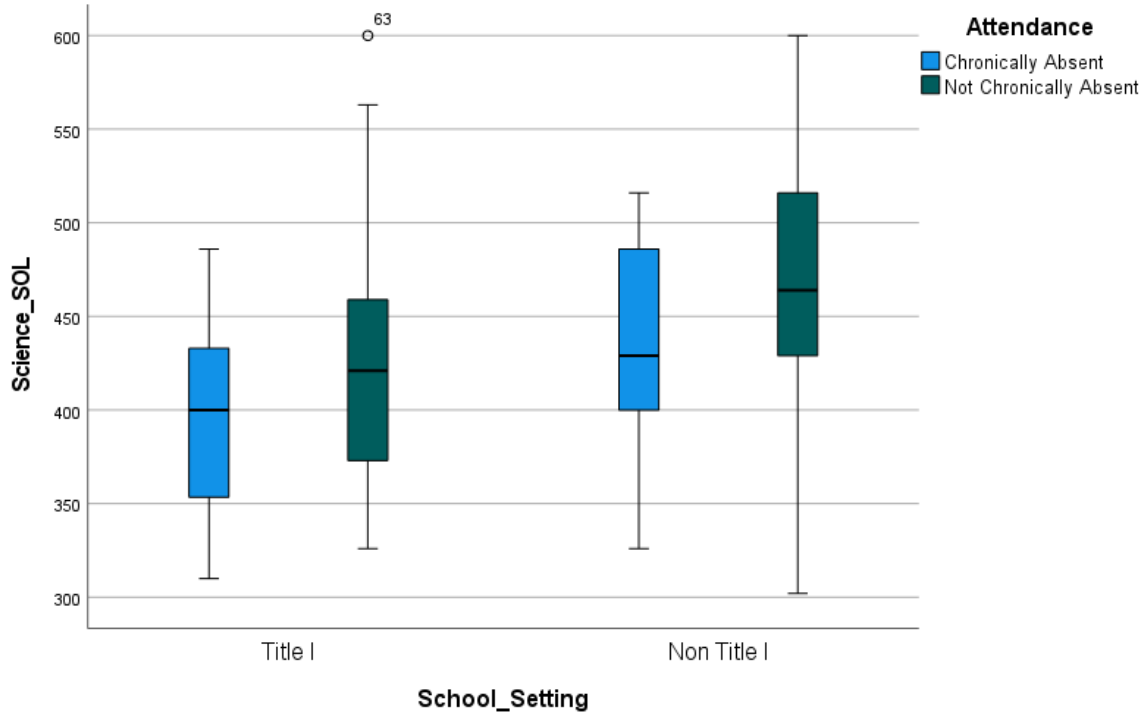


Figure 3

Box and Whisker Plot for School Setting and Attendance for Science SOL



Descriptive Statistics

A total of 170 5th grade students were sampled from 28 elementary schools. The attendance breakdown for the participants was evenly split in the study with 85 (50%) being chronically absent and 85 (50%) having regular school attendance. The number of students attending Title I school was 67 (39.4%) and the number of students attending non-Title I schools was 103 (61.6%). The descriptive frequency for 5th grade students by attendance and school type are listed in Table 1. The participant records include 2018-2019 school year total number of school days absent, a classification of school type, and the 2018-2019 standard scaled scores for the math, English, and science SOL assessments. These variables were analyzed on the basis of school type and absenteeism classification. Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the variables that were analyzed.

Table 1

Descriptive Frequencies of Participants (N = 170)

		N	%
Total Participants		170	100
School Type			
	Title I	67	39.4%
	Non-Title I	103	60.6%
Attendance			
	Chronically Absent	85	50.0%
	Not Chronically Absent	85	50.0%

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Setting	Attendance		*N*	Min.	Max.	Mean	*SD*
Title I	Chronically Absent	Math SOL	39	273	545	397.97	59.653
		English SOL	39	249	520	405.18	74.623
		Science SOL	39	310	486	394.56	50.605
		Valid N (listwise)	39				
	Not Chronically Absent	Math SOL	28	324	524	437.82	44.319
		English SOL	28	367	592	438.07	58.365
		Science SOL	28	326	600	423.75	66.695
		Valid N (listwise)	28				
Non-Title I	Chronically Absent	Math SOL	46	265	538	432.98	53.954
		English SOL	46	278	569	427.74	66.147
		Science SOL	46	326	516	432.24	54.666
		Valid N (listwise)	46				
	Not Chronically Absent	Math SOL	57	328	558	458.65	51.832
		English SOL	57	270	585	457.54	65.083
		Science SOL	57	302	600	464.44	67.298
		Valid N (listwise)	57				

Assumption Tests

Assumption of Normality

Three two-way analyses of variances (ANOVAS) were used to test the null hypotheses and examine for the differences between end-of-year test scores between chronically absent and non-chronically absent students attending Title I and non-Title I schools. A two-way ANOVA required that assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were met. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used because the sample size was greater than 50 subjects (a total of 170) subjects. The assumption of normality was not met for each category, however the research continued with the analysis due to the fact that ANOVA is robust in handling this violation. See Tables 3 and 4 for tests of normality for each of the independent variables.

Table 3

Tests of Normality for School Setting (Title I or Non-Title I)

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Setting	Statistic	*df*	Sig.	Statistic	*df*	Sig.
Math SOL	Title I	.125	67	.011	.976	67	.215
	Non-Title I	.068	103	.200*	.976	103	.055
English SOL	Title I	.103	67	.077	.975	67	.200
	Non-Title I	.099	103	.015	.973	103	.031
Science SOL	Title I	.071	67	.200*	.960	67	.029
	Non-Title I	.073	103	.200*	.985	103	.314

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 4

Tests of Normality for Attendance (Chronically Absent or Not Chronically Absent)

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Attendance	Statistic	*df*	Sig.	Statistic	*df*	Sig.
Math SOL	Chronically Absent	.114	85	.008	.971	85	.054
	Not Chronically Absent	.065	85	.200*	.981	85	.257
English SOL	Chronically Absent	.110	85	.012	.970	85	.042
	Not Chronically Absent	.073	85	.200*	.984	85	.392
Science SOL	Chronically Absent	.076	85	.200*	.967	85	.030
	Not Chronically Absent	.072	85	.200*	.983	85	.324

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Assumption of Homogeneity of Variance

The assumption of homogeneity of variance was determined using Levene's test. Levene's test for equality of variances was found tenable for the math, English, or science category analysis which resulted in $F(3, 166) = 1.19$, $p = .32$, $F(3, 166) = 0.86$, $p = .46$, and $F(3, 166) = 0.62$, $p = .60$ respectively. The assumption of homogeneity was met. See Tables 5, 6, and 7 for Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances.

Table 5

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a,b]

		Levene Statistic	*df*1	*df*2	Sig.
Math SOL	Based on Mean	1.190	3	166	.315
	Based on Median	.792	3	166	.500
	Based on Median and with adjusted *df*	.792	3	157.671	.500
	Based on trimmed mean	1.174	3	166	.321

a. Dependent variable: Math SOL

b. Design: Intercept + School Setting + Attendance + School Setting * Attendance

Table 6

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a,b]

		Levene Statistic	*df*1	*df*2	Sig.
English SOL	Based on Mean	.859	3	166	.464
	Based on Median	.670	3	166	.571
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.670	3	161.230	.571
	Based on trimmed mean	.821	3	166	.484

a. Dependent variable: English SOL

b. Design: Intercept + School Setting + Attendance + School Setting * Attendance

Table 7

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a,b]

		Levene Statistic	*df*1	*df*2	Sig.
Science SOL	Based on Mean	.628	3	166	.598
	Based on Median	.631	3	166	.596
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.631	3	145.041	.596
	Based on trimmed mean	.625	3	166	.600

a. Dependent variable: Science SOL

b. Design: Intercept + School Setting + Attendance + School Setting * Attendance

Results

Null Hypothesis One

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the impact of school setting and attendance on mathematics scores. Participants were divided into two groups according to the type of school they attended and their attendance. The interaction effect between school setting and attendance was not statistically significant $F(1,166) = .71$, $p = .40$. There was a statistically significant main effect for school setting ($F(1,166) = 10.95$, $p = .001$. The effect size was medium (partial eta squared = .06). The main effect for attendance was statistically significant $F(1,166) = 15.08$, $p < .001$. The effect size was large (partial eta squared = .08). Because the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis, post hoc analysis was not required. See Table 8 for Tests of Between-Subject Effects.

Table 8

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Math SOL

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	*df*	*MS*	*F*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	85683.781[a]	3	28561.260	10.094	<.001	.154
Intercept	29650647.614	1	29650647.614	10479.067	<.001	.984
School Setting	30973.964	1	30973.964	10.947	.001	.062
Attendance	42653.734	1	42653.734	15.075	<.001	.083
School Setting * Attendance	1996.902	1	1996.902	.706	.402	.004
Error	469699.042	166	2829.512			
Total	32628004.000	170				
Corrected Total	555382.824	169				

a. R Squared = .154 (Adjusted R Squared = .139)

Null Hypothesis Two

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the impact of school setting and attendance on English scores. Participants were divided into two groups according to the type of school they attended and their attendance. The interaction effect between school setting and attendance was not statistically significant $F(1,166) = .02$, $p = .88$. There was a statistically significant main effect for school setting ($F(1,166) = 3.95$, $p = .049$. The effect size was small (partial eta squared = .02). The main effect for attendance was statistically significant $F(1,166) = 8.79$, $p = .003$. The effect size was medium (partial eta squared = .05). Because the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis, post hoc analysis was not required. See Table 9 for Tests of Between-Subject Effects.

Table 9

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: English SOL

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	*df*	*MS*	*F*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	66246.001[a]	3	22082.000	4.969	.003	.082
Intercept	29688790.658	1	29688790.658	6680.876	<.001	.976
School Setting	17554.900	1	17554.900	3.950	.049	.023
Attendance	39059.408	1	39059.408	8.790	.003	.050
School Setting * Attendance	94.704	1	94.704	.021	.884	.000
Error	737678.611	166	4443.847			
Total	32862648.000	170				
Corrected Total	803924.612	169				

a. R Squared = .082 (Adjusted R Squared = .066)

Null Hypothesis Three

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the impact of school setting and attendance on science scores. Participants were divided into two groups according to the type of school they attended and their attendance. The interaction effect between school setting and attendance was not statistically significant $F(1,166) = .03$, $p = .88$. There was a statistically significant main effect for school setting ($F(1,166) = 16.73$, $p < .001$. The effect size was large (partial eta squared = .09). The main effect for attendance was statistically significant $F(1,166) = 10.27$, $p = .002$. The effect size was medium (partial eta squared = .06). Because the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis, post hoc analysis was not required. See Table 10 for Tests of Between-Subject Effects., there was no statistically significant interaction effect between school setting and attendance.

Table 10

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Science SOL

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	*df*	*MS*	*F*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	116375.750[a]	3	38791.917	10.635	<.001	.161
Intercept	29225423.454	1	29225423.454	8012.027	<.001	.980
School Setting	61019.090	1	61019.090	16.728	<.001	.092
Attendance	37442.632	1	37442.632	10.265	.002	.058
School Setting * Attendance	90.240	1	90.240	.025	.875	.000
Error	605517.244	166	3647.694			
Total	32594157.000	170				
Corrected Total	721892.994	169				

a. R Squared = .161 (Adjusted R Squared = .146)

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

Chapter five will discuss the results of this study that were presented in chapter four. Each of the three hypotheses are discussed. The implications of this study, the limitations of the study results, and recommendations for future research will also be addressed.

Discussion

This causal-comparative study aimed to determine if socioeconomic status imparts any additional impacts on the achievement of chronically absent 5th grade students as measured by the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments. Student achievement for all three tested subjects (math, English, and science) was comparable and there was no significant interaction between school setting and student attendance.

The following nulls were explored:

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant difference in mathematics scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school.

H_{02}: There is no statistically significant difference in English scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school.

$H_0$3: There is no statistically significant difference in science scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school.

Null Hypothesis One

According to null hypothesis one, there is no statistically significant difference in

mathematics scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school. The null hypothesis failed to be rejected. There was no significant interaction effect on the achievement of chronically absent and non-chronically absent students attending Title I and non-Title I schools. The link between socioeconomic status and chronic absenteeism is complex and although there is an abundance of literature on socioeconomic inequalities in school attendance, there exists no systematic review on SES and school absenteeism (Sosu et al., 2021). The findings of this study show inconclusive evidence that SES imparts additional impacts on the achievement of chronically absent students. Caution should be taken in elucidating SES effects on absenteeism based on any one study and the results should be replicated using a variety of deigns, data, and settings (Sosu et al., 2021).

Contrary to the findings of this study, Mooney et al. (2022) found partial support for the influence of socioeconomic status on the association between absenteeism and academic achievement. These differences suggest the need for further research focused specifically on the interaction of SES and attendance on academic achievement.

Analyzing the math data on the basis of attendance alone showed that differences ($p < .001$) existed among the two groups of students—those who were chronically absent and those with regular school attendance. This result is supported by previous studies that found that the number of days a student missed affected their overall mathematics performance as early as elementary school and as late as college (Garcia & Weiss, 2018; Gottfried, 2019; Schmidt & Raines, 2019).

When the math data were analyzed on the basis of socioeconomic status to see the difference between the academic achievement of students attending Title-I and non-Title-I

schools, the findings were that a statistically significant difference ($p = .001$) existed. These results are consistent with recent studies that have found a correlation between socio-economic status and math achievement. Data from 50 countries analyzed by Gustafsson et al. (2018) found that a relationship exists between SES and mathematics achievement. In fact, they concluded that SES was the strongest determinant of differences across schools. Furthermore, Ng et al. (2021) conducted a study on the SES and math achievement gap of early childhood students and found family socioeconomic status to be negatively associated with the development of a child's mathematics skills.

Null Hypothesis Two

According to null hypothesis two, there is no statistically significant difference in English scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school. The null hypothesis failed to be rejected. There was no interaction among the achievement of chronically absent and non-chronically absent students attending Title I and non-Title I schools.

When the English data were analyzed on the basis of attendance alone, a statistically significant difference ($p = .003$) existed between students who were chronically absent and students who had regular school attendance. Dozens of empirical studies have been completed leading to the belief that more time spent in the classroom is associated with better academic achievement (Klein et al., 2022). On the contrary, there is also evidence supporting the hypothesis that the effect of absences on reading achievement is not significant (Moone et al., 2022).

Analyzing the English data solely on socioeconomic status showed that a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.49$) exists among students attending Title I and non-Title I schools.

Research suggests that students of lower socioeconomic status typically perform lower than their more affluent peers (American Psychological Association, 2021; McKenzie, 2019; Ruiz et al., 2018 ; Williams et al., 2018; Yan & Gai, 2022). This study reiterates the socioeconomic gaps that exists in the academic achievement of elementary students.

Null Hypothesis Three

According to null hypothesis three, there is no statistically significant difference in science scores among 5th grade students who are chronically absent and those who are not chronically absent based on their school setting, Title I or non-Title I school. The null hypothesis failed to be rejected. There was no interaction among the achievement of chronically absent and non-chronically absent students attending Title I and non-Title I schools.

Analyzing the science end-of-course data solely on attendance showed a statistically significant difference ($p = .002$) existed between students who were chronically absent and students who had regular school attendance. Overwhelming research exists showing a negative association between school absenteeism and student academic achievement (Gottfried 2015, 2019; Gottfried & Kirksey, 2017; Kirksey, 2019; Klein, 2022).

Looking at the science data through the lens of socioeconomic status alone, a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$) is found. Academically, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are outperformed by their high socioeconomic peers (Lurie et al., 2021). There is extensive research on socioeconomic gaps in math and English achievement, however, not a lot of research is focused on socioeconomic inequalities in science, especially in the primary stages (Betancur et al., 2018). These results are consistent with the findings of Tan et al. (2023) which concluded that socioeconomic status has a large influence on science achievement. Tan (2022) notes that both direct and indirect socioeconomic effects are responsible for students' science

achievement. As previously noted, school conditions, home environments, and teacher training and education, are all socioeconomic variables that impact academic achievement (American Psychological Association, 2021; Clotfelter et al., 2006; Gimbert, 2007; Polly et al., 2018; Mujis et al., 2010).

Implications

This study contributed to the larger body of end-of-year testing literature by addressing how socioeconomic status and attendance influence academic performance. Students who are frequently absent from school miss out on instruction from their teacher. Gottfried (2019) identifies chronic absenteeism as a cause for decreased academic performance and low socioeconomic background children generally perform poorly in academics (Vadivel et al., 2023). Few studies, however, have addressed how socioeconomic status affects the achievement of chronically absent children; most studies have focused solely on attendance or socioeconomic status. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of school setting on the academic achievement of chronically absent students.

The general consensus in the literature is that chronic absenteeism negatively impacts student achievement (Ahmar and Anwar, 2013; Allison et al., 2017; Gentle-Genitty et al., 2020; Gottfried, 2015; Gottfried, 2019; Gubbels et al., 2019). Another common theme among the literature is that students of low socioeconomic status perform lower than their more affluent peers (Destin et al., 2019; Liu et al, 2020; Gobena, 2018; Vadivel et al., 2023). It is a widely accepted fact that absenteeism has a considerable impact on student achievement and even though measures are taken to identify students with frequent absences, there is not a lot of guidance on school divisions should use this important data (Garcia &Weiss, 2018). A key implication is that any attempt made to address inequalities in educational results must include

addressing gaps in socioeconomic status and school attendance. There is overwhelming evidence suggesting that chronic absenteeism is damaging to academic success, so practitioners and policy makers need to focus specifically on SES disparities in absences so that socioeconomic achievement gaps can be closed (Sosu et al., 2021).

Despite targeted initiatives, achievement gaps continue to be a problem in the U.S. educational system, particularly for those individuals coming from low-income environments. A better understanding of the factors that differentiate student achievement can aid policy makers and educators in being responsive to efforts to reduce achievement gaps, especially during the most sensitive periods of a child's education. Interventions aimed at decreasing the occurrences of chronic absenteeism among students from lower classes are key in closing socioeconomic achievement gaps. The findings presented in this study have implications for decreasing occurrences of student absence in order to improve academic achievement. Research, policy, and practice must be focused on improving educational opportunities and achievements for economically disadvantaged students.

Limitations

Because it is not possible for a researcher, in a single study, to cover every aspect of variables related to the problem of study, limitations exist. One limitation to this study was the unequal population of students included in the sample. Of the 170 students, only 67 attended Title I schools with the remaining 103 attending non-Title I schools. Given the limited number of students who were chronically absent for the 2018-2019 school year, it was not possible to have an equal split for students in both school settings. Additionally, the data analyzed for this study were ex post facto data from the 2018-2019 school year. Although this archival data were relevant, continued examination of recent data would add to the body of literature.

This study was also limited to the population of the selected school division. Although the sample size was appropriate, the inclusion of other school districts could contribute to the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, this research used only fifth grade students from one school division in the coastal Virginia area. Collecting data from multiple school districts in various parts of the state would have strengthened this study. The data used for this study was only collected from one academic school year. The use of data from several school years could be useful in seeing if results are consistent year after year.

In terms of internal and external validity, it is important to note the school division archival data package that was used in analysis. The researcher used archived data from a population of over 3,000 students attending 19 elementary schools. There are possibilities of inconsistencies among teachers when it comes to daily attendance records. The taking of attendance by short- and long-term substitute teachers may also threaten the validity of the study. Despite these limitations, the researcher is confident that the results are still reliable based on the procedural validity criterion that was met by the analyzed data.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendation 1

Attendance for this study was classified as chronically absent or non-chronically absent. A study could be conducted comparing end-of-year test scores with students with more than two categories of absenteeism. The test scores of students with perfect attendance would be compared with the students missing 1-5 days, 6-10 days, 11-15 days, and 15 or more days. This would offer insight into the time frame of when student achievement begins declining due to absenteeism.

Recommendation 2

This study only addressed students from one school district in one grade level in a single academic school year. Studies that track student achievement at multiple times a year and across multiple academic years are rare (Scammacca et al., 2021). In an effort to enhance results, a similar longitudinal study could be conducted at multiple time points during the year and data collection could take place over multiple academic years.

Recommendation 3

Very few studies have examined the relationship between different forms of absenteeism and student achievement in a single study (Klein et. Al, 2022). A recommendation for further research could include analyzing excused and unexcused absences to see if one is more strongly associated with school performance. It is possible that associations between absence and achievement vary based on the reason for absence.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

IRB Permission

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 6, 2023

Sakeena McSwain
Jillian Wendt

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-377 The Impact of Socioeconomic Status on the Achievement on Chronically Absent Grade 5 Students

Dear Sakeena McSwain, Jillian Wendt,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

(4) Secondary research for which consent is not required: Secondary research uses of identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens, if at least one of the following criteria is met:
(ii) Information, which may include information about biospecimens, is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, the investigator does not contact the subjects, and the investigator will not re-identify subjects;

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Permission to Conduct Research at School District

12/19/2022

Sakeena A. Ash
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
[redacted]

Dear Sakeena A. Ash:

Your request for access to data for your doctoral degree at Liberty University is approved. Specifically, you are approved to conduct your research – The Impact of Socioeconomic Status of the Achievement of Chronically Absent Grade 5 Students. The specific data you are requesting will be provided by the Department of Planning, Policy, and Research which operates within the Division of Communications, Planning, and Research for[redacted].

Your Request for[redacted] Data form has been received. We will make every effort to provide approved data as quickly as possible; there may be delays due to normal school operations. The form does provide the opportunity for you to identify a timeline relating to your research or project.

Should you have further questions, feel free to contact me at[redacted]. Best wishes with your graduate program and continued pursuit of your educational goals.

Sincerely,

[redacted]
Director of Planning, Policy, and Research