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The Effects of Lecturer Absenteeism on Learners Academic Performance in Community Learning Centres in the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality

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Abstract

Absenteeism of lecturers stands out as one of the key problems that adversely affect the performance of the adult education system, which is the case mostly in poorly funded areas such as Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in South Africa. These centres, operating under the Adult and Community Education and Training (ACET) framework, serve as the first point of contact for adult learners and out-of-school youth, particularly those who are not in education, employment, or training, and who are seeking meaningful second-chance learning opportunities. Such a chance would give them the power, the ability to get a job, and to be socially included. The study through such methods as interviews with managers, lecturers, and learners, investigates the effects of lecturer absenteeism on academic performance and engagement of learners in CLCs located within the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. Thematic analysis of the interviews discovered major effects of absenteeism on educational progression, learner morale, and dropout rates, class chaos, irregularity in educational delivery, increased workload, and stress of both learners and lecturers. The results indicate that absenteeism not only disrupts the continuity of the curriculum but also destroys

learners' trust, deepens educational disparities, and lowers institutional credibility. The research also shows that adult learners who combine education with work and take care of their families are the most affected ones by the irregular teaching presence. These findings emphasize the necessity of immediate interventions at the systemic level such as better monitoring, substitute teaching, and the use of digital learning to solve the problem of lecturer absenteeism. This is a proper first step toward sustaining learner motivation, improving academic outcomes, and contributing to the realization of South Africa's bigger dreams of equity, empowerment, and lifelong learning.

Keywords: Lecturer absenteeism, Community Learning Centres, Adult education, Learner motivation, educational inequality, South Africa

1. Introduction

Lecturer absenteeism has been one of the most troubling and complicated issues in the school systems of both the west and the less, privileged countries. It has a negative impact on economic development, social equity, and the quality of education. This problem is even more severe in Community Learning Centres (CLCs), which are part of the Adult and Community Education and Training (ACET) sector in South Africa. These learning centres are the pillars of the national lifelong learning and inclusive development agenda but are still susceptible to the inherent problems of the education system. Tshekedi (2022) states that lecturer absenteeism causes instructional time that teachers can share with students to be dramatically lost, and that is a problem that becomes even more serious in educationally under, resourced areas. In the same way, the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2017) also places absenteeism among the greatest barriers to quality education, and those barriers are hit hardest by adult education because the latter is most in need of regular instructional support, a structured learning environment, and sustained engagement.

The major target groups of CLCs are adult learners and out, of, school youth. Most of them take education as their “second chance” after being denied access to the mainstream school system. These centres offer multiple paths to learning that are in line with the national priorities of equity, empowerment, and employability. Students normally are involved in courses such as primary literacy and numeracy, life orientation and civic education, digital literacy and computer skills, entrepreneurial and

vocational training, and preparation for the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education, and Training (GETC: ABET Level 4), which correspond to the 9th grade. These programmes are the elements of the big picture of South Africa that show the country's commitment to lifelong learning and inclusive development (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2015; UNESCO, 2022).

Adult Learning and Education (ALE) models rely on learner, centred, participative methods that recognize prior knowledge, life experience, and social and cultural factors (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2022). Aitchison (2003) points out that only through relational continuity, trust and being sensitive to adult's obligations outside the class, can one have successful adult education. Regular lecturer absenteeism goes against these concepts as it not only interrupts the teaching process but also learner morale, which leads to fewer learners showing up, and those who do, losing their focus, especially grown, ups who are trying to combine a job, a family, and the community.

Cooper (2012) claims that the main factors contributing to success in adult learning programmes are the continuous support of facilitators and the presence of well, organised learning environments that take into account the time limitations of working adults. In CLCs, where materials are inadequate and contact hours are few, the absence of lecturers makes the situation worse thereby leading to a decrease in learners' motivation, worsening academic performance, and a rise in the number of those dropping out. On top of that, absenteeism is not just a factor that lowers short, term learning outcomes but also long, term employability opportunities thus it keeps the upward trend of poverty and inequality going (Mahlomaholo, 2021).

The effects of the phenomena in question are not limited to the educational places where it happens, but they include the learners' families, the communities they belong to and the overall development of the society. Therefore, this research is aimed at shedding light on lecturer absenteeism's disruptive effect on learner academic performance in Community Learning Centres and discussing this issue as a part of the adult education and social transformation debate.

2. Aim of the Study

The main goal of this research work is to find out how the absence of a lecturer can negatively influence the academic achievement of adult learners in Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the learning process of these learners. The study focuses on figuring out to what extent lecturer absenteeism hampers learner achievement, investigating the connection between the rate of absenteeism and engagement, motivation, and retention of learners and facilitating decisions on policies and school activities concerning the adult education sector in areas with limited resources. In essence, the study is looking to provide evidence that would be helpful for both school strategies and national policy frameworks in bringing about adult education that is both effective and resilient in South Africa.

3. Research Question

How does lecturer absenteeism affect the academic performance of adult learners?

4. Literature Review

Lecturer absenteeism is a case where lecturers do not carry out their contractual teaching duties, either in an excused or unexcused manner. This phenomenon has been a problem for a long time all over the world, but its effects are almost like a plague in under-resourced areas such as Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in South Africa. The World Bank (2020) considers absenteeism the single most threatening factor of education quality in low, and middle, income countries, thus, worsening the global learning crisis. Studies are there to prove the same in Kenya, Nigeria, and Zambia; and these studies have found that even authorised absences affect learner achievement and instructional quality negatively, while those unauthorised absences have a similar effect (Ejere, 2010; Das et al., 2007).

Lecturer absenteeism in South Africa is a complicated issue with several interrelated layers, as it works both as a symptom and a cause of structural dysfunctions in the system. There are hears of lecturers being away due to illness or personal matters after which they are accused of papering over their own absences with fake medical certificates while others are seen packing up the excitement of their union giving them loud smiles with a simple “thank you” for all their good work. Meanwhile, some seriously report for duty but purposely engage in acts of indiscipline such as leaving

the school before the end of a teaching period, among other things in an effort to avoid their teaching, related tasks. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2018) has recorded these instances in CLCs, stating that weak monitoring mechanisms and contradictory enforcement of leave regulations contribute to the continuation of these products. As absenteeism gets to a stage where it is normal in certain centres, it eats away at the institution's culture and subverts the learner's trust.

Adult learners in CLCs are a far cry from regular students. Most of them are workers, parents, and caregivers who manage to juggle their multiple roles and at the same time seek education as a way to empower themselves, get a job, or go back to the formal systems. This truth calls for more than just content delivery; it calls for the continuous presence of the lecturer, his/her emotional involvement, and the use of participatory pedagogy which is the core of ALE principles. According to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2022), ALE is a concept that requires lecturers to respect the experiences of learners. Frequently missing lecturers are not just a logistical issue; it is a way of undermining the relational framework of ALE which in turn leads to learner demotivation and discouragement.

Rogers (2003) claims that adult education yields the best results when educators become co-learners and the process of education is based on experience and collaboration. On the other hand, McKay (2020) and Walters (2018) argue that the reality of CLCs is far from the ideal due to the shortage of staff, bureaucratic stagnation, and chronic underfunding. Most of the centres do not have the means or the freedom to hire substitutes; thus, a single absence may lead to several weeks without instruction.

The impact of lecturer absenteeism is quite serious. The retention of learners goes down, their performance in assessment gets worse, and the momentum of learning is interrupted. The research in Zambia done by Das et al. (2007) found that a lecturer absenteeism five percent increment only caused the student learning gains to fall by four to eight percent. Venketsamy et al. (2021) also found a similar situation in South African community learning centres and said that even if lecturers are motivated, quality teaching will be difficult to sustain in the presence of systemic constraints.

The crisis of absenteeism is not only influenced by psychosocial and systemic factors but also these factors exacerbate the problem. The lecturers in CLCs are mostly in a situation where they are not securely employed, and this situation is characterized by poorly paid, late, paid, run, down, and with limited career growth. These conditions usher in demotivation and absenteeism. At times, in the rural and high, crime situations, the effects of these conditions might be stronger. Akintolu, Letseka, and Uleanya (2022) emphasize that dissatisfaction with the job is the main factor that leads to non, attendance in adult education programmes.

Moreover, lecturer absenteeism has gender, related aspects. For example, Badubi (2017) argues that among the various health care related, taking, on home roles, the HIV/AIDS caregiving duties are the one that impacts female lecturers the most. Also, gender, based violence and family responsibilities might make female lecturers take occasional leave. However, the policies and managerial practices in most centres do not think about these realities and are not prepared to provide strong support systems.

Looking from a management point of view, the leaders in the centre have a great influence on the establishment of the institutional climate and accountability. Gaziel (2004) and Barmby (2006) present the view that the style of leadership and the culture of the organisation which the absenteeism is strongly related are the two main factors that determine this correlation. For instance, in CLCs where leadership is of a collaborative nature, the workers are more saturated with support and commitment from the management which results in a low rate of absenteeism. On the contrary, the use of authoritarian or indifferent leadership styles increases the level of disengagement and the possibility of the staff's misconduct.

The outcomes of absenteeism go far beyond the academic ones. Adult learners, in particular, might have to give up a lot of resources, which include transport costs, time, and emotional energy, to attend classes. When they come and realize that a lecturer is absent or substituting is incompetent in the subject, then the experience might be considered as a lack of respect or failure by the institution. The constant disappointments lead to learner morale going down, more learners leaving the education system, and loss of public trust in the education sector (UIL, 2022; Daniels, 2023).

Absenteeism, in situations like Johannesburg, where socioeconomic inequality combines with educational exclusion, might be on its way to becoming a self-reinforcing cycle if not tackled appropriately. Learners start skipping lessons as they know in advance that their lecturers will be absent, thus, further decreasing attendance and causing a "hollowing, out" effect (Spaull, 2013). The pattern, in the end, is such that the most marginalized learners will be denied consistent access to meaningful education, which is a contradiction of the transformative aims of ALE.

Apart from that, limitations of the solutions are that they need to be multi, level and contextually adaptable. On the institutional side, adult learning centres need better monitoring systems, reliable substitute arrangements, and a constant professional development program for educators. The government departments and policy makers at the national level need to take care of the bigger structural issues like creating sustainable funding models, providing fair employment conditions and effectively integrating ALE into national education and development strategies. As far as digital inclusion is concerned, Nchabeleng (2024) is of the opinion that it would be beneficial for both learners and lecturers if more investment was done especially in the area of hybrid models which can offset the effect of physical absenteeism.

5. Theoretical Framework

This research aligns with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory which puts the main emphasis on learning from seeing, copying the behaviour, and talking with others, and the theory also focuses the role of the one we look up to, e.g. a lecturer. Basically, the theory could be very appropriate for the education environment, for example, Community Learning Centres, where the behaviour of the lecturers can be a good example for the students, who later upon receiving the feedback can develop further learning skills. Students, in case of frequent lecturers' absences, miss these essential learning interactions that are the foundation of academic success.

As adult learners are generally skill, seekers and knowledge, expanders, they can be easily nurtured if only instructors provide guidance and give support. In CLCs, that is where many students rely on interaction with the lecturer in order to be given guidance and encouraged, the occurrence of absenteeism interrupts this most important communication, which thus results in academic performance getting worse. Less

interaction with faculty members led to a decrease in the practice of active learning and less familiarity with challenge situations that were encountered thereby students' inability to increase the academic field and achieve their educational objectives is thus hindered (McLoughlin, 2013).

Furthermore, lecturer absenteeism has the power to influence student motivation negatively and students' feeling that learning environments are becoming alienated. Adult learners are mainly affected by this problem because by nature of their study, coupled with other life obligations, they have to strike a balance. Using Social Learning Theory, the paper could focus on how learning from teachers who are missing in action becomes next to impossible thus they fail to achieve the expected social and cognitive learning outcomes. Such opportunities happen to be the most valuable in adult education when guided instruction plays a pivotal role in student success and retention (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Moreover, modern, day interpretations of Social Learning Theory suggest that digital and blended learning environments are factors in lecturer, student interaction to some extent thus technology, mediated communication may alleviate the effect of lecturer absence, however, on the whole, the emotional and motivational aspects of communication cannot be replaced by technology (Jarvis, 2022).

6. Research Method

This study used a qualitative research approach. This helped to get a lot of detailed and interesting facts, directly from the people, through semi, structured interviews. This process gave the researchers an elbow room to understand the subject better as people could give their expressions regarding their personal experiences in the words of their own choice. This method is based on the interpretive paradigm idea, as explained by Aspers and Corte (2019) and focuses on discovering the viewpoints of the participants in their usual settings. Therefore, it was extremely helpful in finding out the reasons behind the problem of unexcused lecturer absenteeism in Community Learning Centres (CLCs), which stakeholders have identified and felt. Besides, the effectiveness of the exploratory research design met with the requirements of flexibility as was needed for the sudden appearance of new perspectives and deeper understanding of the occurrence, thereby being in accord with Akhtar's (2016) directions.

The population for this study were approximately 200 lecturers and 1, 500 students from more than 30 Community Learning Centres within the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality in Gauteng Province. Due to funding and logistical constraints, it was not possible to research the whole population. So, a purposive sample was taken from three CLCs. The researcher interviewed three centre managers, two lecturers, and two students from each location. Managers were involved because of their leading roles and hands, on experience in managing the processes of teaching and learning. To guarantee enough institutional knowledge, only those who had been managing lecturers and students for at least one year at the same CLC were chosen. The lecturers taking part needed to have at least one year of teaching experience at the same centre so that they could give knowledgeable views. Students were added as a means of finding out how teacher absenteeism had an impact on their academic engagement, on the condition that they had been attending the same CLC for at least six months.

The decision to use purposive sampling was a deliberate one when choosing both the centres and the participants, thus ensuring that individuals with appropriate knowledge and experience are considered. This method was especially effective to determine the persons who could give most information about the research questions. There was no limitation to the participants' race or gender during the selection for this study, and throughout this process the participants were treated with equal respect. The following were the criteria for participants: managers of the centre who are able to show at least one year of experience in a managerial role at the same CLC, teachers with at least one year of teaching experience at the chosen branch, people who know the aims of the research and have volunteered to take part without money being given in exchange, and those who are willing and able to give informed consent. The implementation of this research method contributed to the trustworthiness of the results as it ensured that the participants had both the knowledge from their own experience and the background of the phenomenon under study.

6.1 Description of Participants

The researchers used purposive sampling to choose the participants for this research. A thorough description of the research participants is very important to the readers as it gives them a deeper perception of the study and its trustworthiness. A table

describing the participants in detail concerning their roles, gender, and years of professional experience is given below. In order to protect the participants' identities, pseudonyms have been used and at the same time, their roles and locations are clearly specified. The first letter in the pseudonym (A, B, or C) stands for the centre from which the participant originates. The abbreviations "CM, " "L, " and "LN" stand for Centre Manager, Lecturer, and Learner respectively. For example, "CM, A" refers to the Centre Manager from Centre A, while "CA, L1" denotes Lecturer 1 from Centre A. Similarly, "CB, LN2" refers to Learner 2 from Centre B. The number after the role abbreviation helps to differentiate those who have the same role in the same centre. This method keeps the privacy of the people involved and yet allows the readers to link the participant comments and experiences with their roles, gender, and years of experience. At the same time, it is in line with ethical research standards in qualitative inquiry, striving to secure the rights of the participants and providing analytical transparency (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 1: Description of the population

CENTRE	PSEUDONYM	POSITION	GENDER	EXPERIENCE
A	CM-A	Centre Manager	Male	3 years
	CA-L1	Lecturer	Male	6 years
	CA-L2	Lecturer	Male	5 years
	CA-LN1	Learner	Female	2 years
	CA-LN2	Learner	Female	3 years
B	CM-B	Centre Manager	Male	10 years
	CB-L1	Lecturer	Female	14 years
	CB-L2	Lecturer	Male	1 year
	CB-LN1	Learner	Female	1 year
	CB-LN2	Learner	Male	2 years
C	CM-C	Centre Manager	Male	6 years
	CC-L1	Lecturer	Female	2 years
	CC-L2	Lecturer	Female	7 years
	CC-LN 1	Learner	Female	3 years
	CC-LN2	Learner	Female	1 year

6.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers used semi-structured interviews to collect data. This method allowed participants to give detailed descriptions of their experiences and views, which led to a more profound study. The researchers used thematic analysis to look at the data. They were following the six, step process by Lester, Cho, and Lochmiller (2020). Steps in this method included immersion in the data, code creation, theme identification, theme refinement, theme naming and description, and finally, reporting the findings in an integrated manner. Because thematic analysis is iterative, it helped the researchers to find not only those things which the researchers expected but also the things that were a surprise, thus, they captured them too. That is the way they could say that the research findings are true and accurate.

Throughout the research process, ethical protocols were followed. The study received an ethical go ahead from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) within the College of Education (CEDU), University of South Africa (UNISA). Also, permission was given by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). All participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and those who agreed to participate were given consent forms . In these consent forms, among other things, the objectives of the study, the research procedures, and the voluntary nature of participation were explained clearly. Participants were given enough information about their rights. One of these rights was that they could decide not to take part in the research at any time and without giving a reason. Strict confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, with all participant information fully de-identified. This included interview transcripts, audio recordings, and institutional documents.

Moreover, the investigation was in line with the principles of beneficence, respect, and justice. These principles were the means through which the participants' dignity and autonomy were protected not only before but also during the research process (Bryman, 2016).

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 Results

The below information represents the findings from centre managers, lecturers, and learners in Community Learning Centres located in the Johannesburg Metropolitan area, South Africa, regarding the effects of lecturer absenteeism on learners.

7.1.1 Theme 1: Impact on Academic Progress

Learner's academic progress is greatly affected by the lecturer's absence when it hinders them to a point where they don't have the continuous follow up of the study and the guidance. Without the regular guidance of the instructor, they find it very difficult to go at the same speed which results in a shortfall of the content that has to be covered and an increase in academic pressure. Centre Manager A talked about the difficulty that learners who travel a long-distance face:

“Our learners are many who travel more than an hour to come attend. When lecturers don't come, these learners lose valuable time and money. It is difficult to catch up, and they fall behind very quickly.”

Centre Manager B referred to the absence of lecturers as a structural problem:

“We do not have standby lecturers. When a lecturer is absent, no learning happens, the syllabus gets delayed, and the learners suffer.”

Lecturer 3 from Centre A to a certain extent, agrees with the impact:

“As employees, when we are not around, learners are the ones who lose. Most of them are entirely dependent on us for explanations because they do not have access to extra resources or tutors.”

Learner 1 from Centre A said that they experience a lack of consistency:

“Sometimes we go a long way, only to be met with a wait, with no lecturer. It is terrible to go back home without learning.”

These 5 viewpoints combined exemplify the ways in which absenteeism dismantles the progress of the curriculum, the demoralization of students, and the deepening of the educational divide, which limits the academic progress.

7.1.2 Theme 2: Decreased Motivation and Increased Dropout Rates

One of the most common occurrences as a consequence of lecturer absences is the dwindling enthusiasm of adult learners which inevitably has a hand in higher dropout rates. Centre Manager B elaborated on this situation:

“Learners are many who school and at the same time have to take care of their personal lives. If lecturers are often absent, learners feel that their efforts are in vain.”

Lecturer 1 from Centre B noticed:

“Learners when they feel that teachers are not committed, they stop coming to class.”

Learner 1 from Centre B sounded like giving up:

“You try to push yourself, but finding no lecturer again makes you want to quit.”

This loss of motivation is compounded by long commutes, irregular classes, and inconsistent teaching, creating an environment where continuing education feels burdensome, and therefore, many choose to drop out. The gradual effect of absenteeism is, therefore, a cause of attrition which goes against the national goals of lifelong learning and inclusive development.

7.1.3 Theme 3: Classroom Disruptions

Being without lecturers for some time results in the learners getting bored and turning to disruptive behaviour, which in turn affects the general learning environment negatively. Centre Manager C commented:

“Classes become chaotic when there is no lecturer. Learners move around, make noise, and disturb others. This does not only affect one class but the whole centre.”

Lecturer 2 from Centre A talked about the confusion:

“We are not guided, we get bored. Some talk; others leave. It is chaos without a lecturer.”

Not being monitored makes the learners pay less attention to their studies, and they also tend to lose focus and get easily distracted, thus, the only class that suffers from this incident is not the one that the lecturer has absented but the whole educational environment. Such disruptions highlight the importance of a lecturer not only for the delivery of instruction but also for maintaining institutional order and learner engagement.

7.1.4 Theme 4: Inconsistency in Education

Learners keep on feeling the pinch of the recurring problem that is the inconsistency in education when it comes to lessons delivery and lecturer absenteeism. Lecturer 3 from Centre A mentioned:

“Following a curriculum is difficult when you have to face cancellations and delays of classes. At times, we come all the way, only to find no lecturer, and lessons get postponed or skipped.”

Centre Manager A confessed the difficulties with scheduling:

“We are trying to reschedule missed lessons, but the limited time and the demands of the day sometimes let lessons fall through. The learners are the ones who pay the price.”

Their inconsistencies interrupt the continuous flow of learning; frustration takes hold of them because they are confused and it is difficult for them to fulfil their educational goals. The not, so, consistent practices also weaken the credibility of the CLCs as reliable educational institutions, thus, they are challenging the public trust.

7.1.5 Theme 5: Increased Workload and Stress

After the times when lecturers are absent and have to rush to cover the missed material, it is usually the learners who get an increased workload and are put under great stress. Lecturer 1 from Centre B said:

“Upon return, the lecturers expect us to do quickly what they have left undone without us. To have a lot of extra work coming from different sides is stressful when you’ve got school and other things to do at the same time.”

Lecturer 3 from Centre C mentioned:

“Sometimes it reaches a point where they get so frustrated that they give up and stop trying.”

This extra load may lead to the loss of energy and enthusiasm, a feeling of great anxiety, as well as lower motivation, both in learners and lecturers. So, the findings reliable presence of absenteeism as one at the centre of a cyclical burden, whereby learners and lecturers alike feel inconvenienced by the increased levels of stress, which ultimately results in the inability of adult education programmes to achieve their intended outcomes.

7.2 Discussion

7.2.1 Theme 1: Impact on Academic Progress

The results indicate that learner academic progress is the main victim of lecturer absenteeism, which the latter is to blame for a great part of learner academic disruption and slowdowns. Learner academic progress is heavily affected by the absence of critical explanations and support due to the lack of a lecturer’s presence. It was vividly demonstrated by the quote of Centre Manager A describing the time and money that adult learners wasted during such a situation. Centre Manager B has further added that the absence of standby lecturers leads to a situation where no one is there to maintain learning continuity. In a situation where the lecturers are the only source of knowledge and no additional resources or tutoring exist, learners are in a pitiable state which is the unfortunate consequence of absenteeism (Lecturer 3). In addition, the statement by a lecturer, which is that learners become disengaged over time, and therefore they do not attend classes themselves, thus hinting at a vicious cycle where lecturer absenteeism leads not only to the delay of learning but also to the erosion of learners’ commitment, can be taken as evidence of the latter phenomenon. Learners’ frustration with the situation of "wasting effort and missing out" (Learners 1 and 3) is a

mirror through which one can see that lecturer absenteeism aggravates educational inequalities especially in resource, poor environments where learners are unable to access alternative support easily. These findings are supported by the reference to McKay (2020) who argues that the lack of teacher engagement leads to poor learning outcomes and that the gap in educational attainment widens in marginalized communities. This theme also illustrates how the issue of absenteeism becomes a barrier to the realization of South African government's broad policy goals of equity and lifelong learning, thus negatively affecting the transformative potential of Community Learning Centres.

7.2.2 Theme 2: Decreased Motivation and Increased Dropout Rates

According to the data, the negative impact of absenteeism on adult learners' motivation is so strong that it eventually results in an increase in dropout rates. Adult learners have to deal with a multitude of challenges at the same time, such as work, family, and other responsibilities, which makes their commitment to education very fragile. As B, a centre manager, puts it, the feeling that one's efforts are in vain when lecturers are frequently absent can be very discouraging. This view is supported by lecturers' testimonies which state that students gradually lose trust in the educational process and become inactive members of the community (Lecturers 1 and 2). The emotional giving up on which the thought of quitting is based, as told by learners, is an example of the human cost of absenteeism that goes beyond academic performance. The interaction of logistical problems such as long rides and irregular classes with learners' motivation is an exhausting cycle that leaves very little room for persistence in the program. This finding is in line with adult education motivation theories, which argue that engagement can be sustained only in a continuous and supportive learning environment (Ismail, 2018). Additionally, it is an implication that absenteeism weakens not only the delivery of content but also the trust which is vitally important for adult learners to be able to keep their commitment. The decline of trust between learners and institutions is, therefore, very harmful, especially in adult education, where relational continuity is primary retention and success of learners.

7.2.3 Theme 3: Classroom Disruptions

The repercussions of lecturer absenteeism on classroom discipline and the general atmosphere extend far beyond the immediate situation. The lack of supervision leads to disorder and non, focus in classrooms, as has been reported by both centre managers and students. The resulting eagerness for activity and disruptive behaviour not only lead to the loss of valuable instructional time but also have a negative impact on other classes and learners. This finding reveals the dual function of lecturers as both educators and discipline enforcers, a function that is indispensable for the creation and maintenance of a learning environment. The diminishing of the quality of the learning experience due to the loss of order can also have an effect on the morale of both learners and staff. It is an instance of the way absenteeism destroys institutional norms and the social contract within educational settings. This theme is in line with educational research which shows that the presence of the lecturer is crucial for classroom management and that the frequent absences can lead to the decline of the institution's effectiveness (Hlatshwayo, 2022). The findings also imply that absenteeism teeters on the verge of disintegrating the collective learning culture of CLCs, hence, their capacity to operate as educational communities coming together for the common good is weakened.

7.2.4 Theme 4: Inconsistency in Education

The learners' frustration and confusion caused by the irregular and unpredictable attendance of the lecturer, which are themselves the very factors that continuity is undermined, were very aptly brought out by the learner's quotes. Interrupting lesson plans and the consequent need to hurriedly catch up on the work done compromise learners' ability to pick up and consolidate knowledge, as both students and lecturers have recognized. The efforts made by the centre management to find another time for the missed lessons are limited by both the time and the resources available, which is indicative of difficulties of the system in dealing with the consequences of absenteeism. The incoherence of the curriculum as well as the progress of the learners that result from this inconsistency have them lagging behind and struggling with the cumulative content. It indicates a significant structural defect where the educational delivery system is not flexible enough and has no backup mechanisms to ensure stability (Ismail, 2018). The lack of institutional resilience mechanisms, such

as the organization of substitute teaching or provision of e, learning as an alternative, reveals the vulnerability of CLCs to interruptions in lecturer attendance.

7.2.5 Theme 5: Increased Workload and Stress

The increase in workload and psychological stress that follows from absenteeism and the subsequent catch, up activities have a far, reaching negative impact on learner well, being. As against the background of other life challenges, learners struggle to meet the demands of their education and the material missed further adds to the pressure which results in stress and anxiety. The burden is recognized by the lecturers but at the same time, they feel the need to continue at a fast pace so as not to lose time thereby putting the learners in a position to be potentially overloaded. This theme uncovers the mental health struggle of learner motivation and mental health that lie in the shadow of dropout risks and some reduction in overall effectiveness attributed to absenteeism. It draws on adult education literature which points to the necessity of pacing and the dangers of cognitive overload (McKay, 2020). The participants' experience of frustration and burnout is a call for institutional support strategies that are not solely academic but also consider the psychosocial aspects of learning. The finding here calls for integrating mental health support and learner counselling into adult education provision, thereby creating a condition where learners are not only academically but also emotionally sustained.

8. Conclusion

Lecturer absenteeism in Community Learning Centres has been a major factor that has led to learners' academic progress, motivation, and overall learning experience being seriously disrupted. It has resulted in poor classroom discipline, inconsistency, and low, quality education, thus adult learning programmes being at risk of losing their sustainability and becoming less equitable in terms of access. The problem of absenteeism needs to be solved by the use of locally appropriate and well, coordinated measures that will not only hold the lecturers accountable but also provide them support together with the learners. In order to lessen the impact of absenteeism, the centres ought to put in place temporary measures such as engaging substitute teachers, using flexible learning modalities (which should cover modular courses and digital content), and introducing peer mentoring. A strengthened attendance

monitoring system and the existence of a clear policy on attendance can serve as a good preventive measure against those who intend to be absent without leave, while enhanced supervision and regular communication create an atmosphere of stability in the learning environment. In addition, learner support services together with flexible scheduling can contribute to learner engagement and excitement. Subsequent studies may also consider the use of technology, enabled learning as a way of lecturer absenteeism impact mitigation and adult education access expansion.

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