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Relationship Between Senior-Level Student Absences and Class Rankings

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APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Stacie L. Davis under the guidance of Dr. John M. Ritz in SEPS 636, Problems in Education. It was submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science Degree.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Student absenteeism is a problem in every level of education – elementary, secondary, technical, community colleges, and universities. When a student is absent, he or she misses out on the opportunity to be exposed to new skills and practice what been learned. The more lessons a student misses due to absence, the further behind the student will fall and could cause the child to struggle with beginning concepts, thus making it more difficult to grasp more complex concepts built on these. Research shows that students who are absent a lot in one school year are more likely to do the same thing in subsequent years and over the course of four or five years, they may miss more than half of a school year (Toppo, 2012). Also, when a student is absent, the teacher often must take valuable time away from helping other students and focus attention on the student that is behind, which could negatively impact the grades of the entire class. When a school district has a high amount of chronic absentees, it will usually have a lower district-wide GPA than a school system with fewer absences.

Students are required by law to attend school regularly. Unfortunately, there are methods of getting around the truancy policy and ultimately, even with the consequences enforced by the government to mandate school attendance, many students are clearly not consistently attending. New research suggests that nearly 7.5 million students in the United States miss a month of school each year, raising the likelihood that they will fail academically and eventually drop out of high school (Toppo, 2012). There are more than a million teenagers that drop out of high school each year in this country, and “millions more fail to develop the language and learning skills needed to sustain themselves as

adults, let alone live to their full potential" (Balfanz & Chang, 2012, p. 1). Absenteeism, especially truancy or skipping school, has always been a focus in secondary schools where poor performance and dropout rates have been connected to attendance (Balfanz & Chang, 2013). Chronic absenteeism, students who have missed at least 10 percent of the school year or 18 days in most districts, rises in middle school and continues to climb through the 12th grade.

Robert Balfanz's, education research director at Johns Hopkins University's Everybody Graduates Center in Baltimore, findings estimate that "10% to 15% of students nationwide are 'chronically absent' from school, missing enough class time to be at 'severe risk' of dropping out (Toppo, 2012, p. 1). He has been a long time researcher of the role attendance and absenteeism play in urban education and found that urban schools often have as many as one-third of students chronically absent. Currently, only six states – Georgia, Florida, Maryland, Nebraska, Oregon, and Rhode Island – track chronic absenteeism, even though research shows chronic absenteeism correlates with academic trouble (Balfanz & Chang, 2013) with the focus of reducing absenteeism and increasing academic success. California, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Virginia are currently taking action to identify and address chronic absences. Virginia specifically monitors chronic absence as part of their early warning systems, which track a variety of metrics and alerts officials when students might be at risk of not graduating but not with the purpose of reducing absenteeism as a whole (Lu, 2013). This study seeks to determine if senior-level students' grades, which affect both student GPA and class ranking, decline as a result of not attending school regularly.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to examine the effect of senior-level student absences on class ranking as measured by GPA.

Hypothesis

Based on this problem, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H_1: Senior-level high school students with higher absences will have a lower senior class ranking measured by GPA than students with fewer absences.

Background and Significance

This study took place in Henrico County, located adjacent to Virginia's capital, Richmond. Virginia's high school graduation rate has remained above the national average in the last decade (High School Graduation, 2014) and over 89 percent of Henrico's residents are high school graduates or higher, compared to Virginia's 86.9 percent rate ("Henrico County Quickfacts", 2014). Of those that graduated, 97.7 percent earned their diplomas ("School", 2014). In addition to Henrico County's level of consistency in producing graduates with diplomas, it is Virginia's fifth most populous county ("Find a County", 2013).

Since student absenteeism is a national epidemic and urban schools serving economically disadvantaged students are reported to have the highest chronic absenteeism, the researcher selected Hermitage High School, one of the eight public high schools in Henrico County, to obtain data. In the 2012-13 school year, Hermitage High School had approximately 1,700 students that attended and was considered average in the state academically. It was consistent with the state's average college readiness, math proficiency, and reading proficiency rates, showing as the only school in the county that

is near the state's average in all three categories. The other seven high schools in Henrico County were either above or below the state's average in at least one category (Henrico County Public Schools, 2012).

Hermitage High School's gender was distributed fairly even with 54 percent of students being male and 46 percent female. Forty-three percent of the population was categorized as economically disadvantaged, however Hermitage did not receive any Title I funding during the 2012-13 school year (Henrico County Public Schools, 2012). Black/African American and White/Caucasian students made up the majority of Hermitage's population at 83 percent during the 2012-13 school year; however the school has a diverse population. It had 64 percent minority throughout the student body, 58 percent at the senior-level, consisting of Hispanic/Latino (8.1 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (less than 1 percent), Asian (6.1 percent), African American/Black (42.2 percent), Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (less than one percent), and White (42.0 percent).

Senior-level students pursuing a diploma at Hermitage High School must earn both standard and verified credits to graduate in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Currently, there are no references of attendance requirements that must be met to graduate, but attendance plays a role in academic success. Class ranking is a method of determining how "successful" a student is compared to the rest of the student body of a specific grade level using the student's grade point average, or GPA. Class ranking not only represents academic success but can also predict college preference. After completing a study at Princeton University, Tienda, Cortes, and Niu (2003) stated that,

> College attendance differs according to their class rank. Among students who graduated in the top decile of their high school class, the vast majority—over 80 percent—enrolled in a four-year institution, compared with 64 percent of second decile graduates and only 30 percent of students ranked at or below the 30th percentile of their high school class. (pp. 18-19)

Previous studies indicate that when students miss the majority of instruction, their grades suffer, their future is negatively influenced, and it costs taxpayers thousands of dollars, whether due to tardiness and/or truancy (Garry, 1996). With daily absentee rates as high as 30 percent in some regions, it is not surprising that absenteeism is rated among the major problems facing schools (Garry, 1996). This study will determine if absenteeism affects senior-level high school students' class ranking, which is based upon the student's cumulative GPA.

Limitations

This research was conducted at Hermitage High School in Henrico County. Student class rank, GPA, and attendance records for the senior-level 2012-13 class were obtained through the school's Registrar and School Counseling Director using the data software programs WinSchool, Web Reporting, eClass Attendance, and Open District. Attendance of high school senior-level students in other Henrico County Public School programs and Technical Centers were not included in the study (e.g., Night School, Hermitage Technical Center).

Assumptions

Several assumptions were made regarding this study. It was assumed that absences were properly tracked by each school and connected to each student's

identification number in the event a student changed schools within the district during the school year. Senior ranking is based on students' classified as seniors during the time of school ranking by the school's counseling department. Senior-level students officially withdrawn from Hermitage High School to attend another high school or program prior to class ranking on February 15, 2013, were excluded. Senior-level students that graduated from Hermitage High School in the summer of 2013 were excluded from this study. Students who obtained another diploma authorized by the Board of Education during his or her senior year were included in this study. Senior level students who dropped out or did not graduate after February 15, 2013, the date the senior class was ranked, were included in this study.

Students who were not present on a regular basis miss valuable class instruction and course material and were less prepared for tests, assessments, and other graded assignments which are predictive of lower achievement and possible dropout. All students were made aware and agreed to Henrico County Public Schools' Code of Conduct Attendance Policy. The policy states:

> A. Excessive and Unexcused Tardies or Absences to School or Class
>
> Students are expected to attend all assigned classes every day. Absence from class includes late arrival, early dismissal or being missing from any class. Justifiable reasons for nonattendance should be submitted to the school for each absence, late arrival, or class absence. Absences from class require approval from an administrator. Unexcused tardies and/or skipping classes are considered violations of compulsory attendance.

B. Compulsory Attendance

When a student accumulates five (5) unexcused absences, the parent will be contacted and the school social worker will develop a plan with the parents to resolve the student's nonattendance.

When a student accumulates six (6) unexcused absences, the school social work supervisor will report the attendance status to the Commonwealth Attorney's Office.

When a student accumulates seven (7) unexcused absences, the school social worker will file a complaint against the student and/or parents through Henrico Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court.

C. Truancy

All student absences are considered unexcused unless the parent either calls the school or sends a written note to provide a justifiable reason for the absence within 24 hours of the absence. Acceptable excuses include the following:

1. Illness of student
2. Serious illness in family which necessitates absence of student
3. Death in family
4. Special and recognized religious holidays
5. Other reasons approved by principal

Procedures

Two sets of data were compared from Hermitage High School: senior-level student absenteeism and senior-class ranking - how a student's performance compares to other students in his or her class. From these two sets of data, Pearson's r was applied to

determine if there was a significant relationship between days of missed classes and class rank determined by GPA.

Definition of Terms

As with any research study, certain terms specific to the study must be defined. For purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Absenteeism – a tendency to be away from work or school without a good reason; a practice or habit of being absent from work of school (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Class Rank – refers to the hierarchical ranking of students based on academic performance or grade point average; rankings may be expressed in numerical order or as percentiles (“Class Rank”, 2013)

Chronic Absence – missing at least 10 percent of the school year or in the previous year missed a month or more of school; includes excused and unexcused absences (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012)

Graduation Rate – measures that reflect the percentage of students earning a regular diploma within four years of entering high school (“Status Dropout Rates”, n.d.)

GPA – Grade Point Average – the average obtained by dividing the total number of grade points earned by the total number of credits attempted (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Truancy – Unexcused absences of individual students (Lu, 2013)

Summary and Overview

Chapter I presented an introduction to this research study. The two variables being compared were high school student absenteeism and class ranking by way of GPA

at the high school senior-level. In Chapter II of this research study, literature about this subject is presented. The researcher attempted to determine if the mentioned variables had been found and tested in recent and past literature and if absenteeism had an effect on senior-level class ranking in those findings. In Chapter III, the researcher discussed the population and the methods and procedures used in collecting the relevant data from the population for this research study. Chapter IV focused on the statistical findings, statistical analysis using Pearson's r, and data collection of this study as well as findings which show the effects of absenteeism on academic success resulting in lower GPA and class ranking. Chapter V discussed the summary, conclusions, and recommendations that could be made relative to the outcome of the study. The researcher attempted to determine if certain generalizations could be made relative to large populations of students regarding absenteeism and senior-level class ranking which is calculated from each student's cumulative GPA.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

This chapter described literature related to high school absenteeism and class rank. The literature was reviewed to provide clarity to the questions identified in this research study. In this chapter, the researcher described the student absenteeism epidemic, class rank, and the findings of previous research.

Student Absenteeism Epidemic

The literature reviewed disclosed the history of student absenteeism, how common the problem is throughout the nation, and the effects it has on people, schools, communities, and states in this nation. Student truancy is not a new phenomenon and it is a concern for secondary education instructors, administrators, and government officials, however, school systems have yet to determine a solution to this problem. The impact of chronic absences is significant and educators and policymakers cannot truly understand achievement gaps or efforts to close them without considering chronic absenteeism.

Chronic absenteeism is not the same as truancy or average daily attendance – the attendance rate schools use for state report cards and federal accountability. It means missing at least 10 percent of a school year for any reason. A school can have average daily attendance of 90 percent and still have 40 percent of its students chronically absent because on different days, different students make up that 90 percent that are attending. In high school, where chronic absenteeism is higher, there are 61 schools where 250 or more students are missing a month or more of school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Chronic absenteeism is most prevalent among low-income students. Of the six states that address chronic absenteeism – Georgia, Florida, Maryland, Nebraska, Oregon

and Rhode Island – all reported that schools in urban areas with high poverty experience up to one-third of students chronically absent. According to Balfanz and Byrnes (2012), one in four students can miss at least a month's worth of school in poor rural areas. In high poverty areas, "significant numbers of students are missing amounts of school that are staggering: on the order of six months to over a year, over a five year period" (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 2). The negative impact chronic absenteeism has on school success, such as increase in dropout rates, has a domino effect, because students who are chronically absent one year are often chronically absent in multiple years.

In a report by Civic Enterprises (2006) titled *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*, the authors displayed the correlation of attendance patterns and student dropouts. It reported that "59 to 65 percent of the students surveyed missed class often the year they dropped out and 33 to 45 percent missed class often the year before they dropped out" (p. 8). The slow process of disengagement from school focuses on class attendance. In 9th grade, 64 percent of the surveyed former students attended class more often than not; by 10th grade, the number had fallen to 51 percent; by 11th grade it was only at 42 percent; and by the 12th grade, only 36 percent of the original surveyed respondents attended their classes always or usually (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006). Attendance patterns are a clear early predictor of students dropping out. Dropouts not only affect their school's statistics and ratings, but the effects are felt by their family, surrounding community, and the government. Unlike their graduating peers,

> Dropouts are more likely to be unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison, on death row, unhealthy, divorced, and ultimately single parents with children who drop out from high school themselves. Our

> communities and nation also suffer from the dropout epidemic due to loss of productive workers and the higher costs associated with increased incarceration, health care, and social services. (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006, p. 2)

This cycle has not substantially improved during the past few decades, even with the educational reform being high on the public agenda (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006).

Class Rank

The term class rank refers to the hierarchical ranking of students based on academic performance or grade point average. Rankings may be expressed in numerical order (first, second, third, top ten, etc.) or as percentiles (top ten percent, top twenty-five percent, etc.). Class rank is typically determined at the end of middle school or high school, and it is used to determine academic honors such as valedictorian (first in the class) and salutatorian (second in the class). While schools do not typically make an entire set of rankings for a graduating class public, it is quite common for schools to publicly announce and celebrate top-ranked students, particular those who end up in the "top ten" or top-tenth percentile ("Class Rank", 2013).

Historically, class rank has been one of the major academic indicators that colleges and universities have used to evaluate and compare the quality of applicants and make admissions decisions ("Class Rank", 2013). Some institutions no longer rely on standardized-test scores but class rank, GPA, grades, essays, personal accomplishments, and other information to make academic decisions. In recent years, some states have guaranteed automatic admission to state colleges or universities if a student is an in-state public school and graduates in a top percentile of their graduating class. In other cases,

valedictorians or other high-ranked students may receive other benefits such as waived or discounted tuition.

Thousands of high schools have stopped providing class rank to colleges and universities concluding that “it could harm the chances of their very good, but not best, students” (Finder, 2006, p. 1). This has left those same colleges and universities vexed. In turn, many colleges and universities are recreating an applicant’s class rank using broad data that high schools often provide and when high schools do not provide enough data to recreate the class rank calculation, many admissions directors say they have “little to no choice but to do something virtually no one wants them to do: give more weight to scores on the SAT and other standardized exams” (Finder, 2006, p. 1). Still, institutions would prefer to see a class rank than recreate one themselves. Dozens of admissions directors said that when a “high school provides a student’s grade point average without giving class rank or other information that puts the grade in context, it significantly diminishes the meaning of the grade” (Finder, 2006, p. 1). Jim Miller, dean of admissions at Brown University said “If a kid has a B-plus record, what does that mean? If a school doesn't give any A's, it could be a very good record. You've got to position the kids in some relative environment” (Finder, 2006, p. 1). William Shain, the dean of undergraduate admissions at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, stated that the lack of information could result in judging the student more on standardized test results, which he said was counterproductive (Finder, 2006). When Shain discussed an internal review of Vanderbilt’s admission rate, it showed that the admission rate for students with a class rank were higher than for students whose schools provided neither a rank or general data about grades (Finder, 2006).

> According to the Glossary of Education Reform regarding class rank definition (2013), class ranking systems give college-admissions offices and prospective employers a clear, comparative measure of how a particular student has performed academically relative to other students in his or her graduating class. It can also create positive academic competition, motivate students to work harder, and deservedly recognize and reward high-achieving students who may have pursued a more challenging course of study. (p. 1)

Findings of Previous Research

Previous studies have proven that absenteeism has an effect on academic performance and class rank, as well as other things. In 1975, Levanto performed a study that concluded that "For senior students, absenteeism generally is lowest for students with the highest class ranks in academic achievement" (p. 20). Through Table 1, he illustrated the correlation between absenteeism and class rank proving that the two variables are connected.

Table 1 shows that as the students represented in each decile increased, so did the average amount of days absent. On the contrary, the higher the class rank, the fewer amount of days students were absent. Therefore, based on Levanto's 1975 study, it is concluded that students who have higher absenteeism have lower class ranks.

Table 1

Absenteeism Comparison by Class Ranking (1975)

Decile	N	Mean Days Absent	S.D.	Absent Less Than 10 Days
1st	65	11.7	10.33	47.7%
2nd	62	14.6	10.84	37.1%
3rd	67	16.1	13.42	35.8%
4th	58	18.1	15.23	29.3%
5th	64	16.2	12.74	29.7%
6th	61	20.3	12.13	19.7%
7th	63	23.9	13.69	11.1%
8th	61	24.5	15.32	19.6%
9th	62	30.5	20.21	11.3%
10th	62	34.8	19.88	9.7%

*12th Grade class rank

Note: Taken from (Levanto, J., 1975, *The Problems of Attendance: Research Findings and Solutions*, p. 16)

Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) evaluated chronic absenteeism data from six states – Georgia, Florida, Maryland, Nebraska, Oregon, and Rhode Island – to assess trends and predict the size of the nation's attendance challenge. The national rate of chronic absenteeism is 10 to 15 percent meaning that 5 million to 7.5 million students are chronically absent; the six states reported chronic absenteeism rates from 6 percent to 23 percent. Balfanz and Byrnes (2013) also studied of the impact of New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's task force on truancy, chronic absenteeism, and school engagement, a program that spanned from 2010 to 2013 and reached more than 60,000 students in NYC public schools. The results of the study showed that students who had chronic absenteeism, missing at least 20 days of school per year, had lower grades and were more likely to drop out than students with better attendance. Similarly, a Utah study found that "students who were chronically absent in any year between eighth and 12th

grades were 7.5 times more likely to drop out of high school" (Balfanz & Chang, 2013, p. 1).

Summary

Reducing the rates of student truancy and chronic absenteeism for senior-level students continues to be a goal of many school systems. Previous research indicates that students who attend regularly have a higher probability of academic achievement, including grades, which ultimately result in a higher GPA and higher class ranking. Since there may be a significant relationship between class rank and senior-level student absences, which affect school graduation and dropout rates, the clear challenge to school policymakers and administrators is to identify and implement measures that will increase attendance. Balfanz and Chang (2013) suggest that administrators can affect student attendance by implementing the three Rs: Reach down, reach out, and reach up.

Reach down involves gathering attendance records from feeder schools to determine what chronically absent students will be entering the school the upcoming year. By knowing this information, administrators can put a plan in place prior to the student's arrival and be prepared to engage those students and parents at the first absence (Balfanz & Chang (2013). Hopefully, through this approach, students and parents will have a fresh start.

Reach out requires administrators to reach out into the community to use the resources available to get more students to school more consistently. For example, many students have asthma and dental problems that often contribute to absenteeism, especially among low-income students; healthcare providers and local agencies can help develop solutions (Balfanz & Chang (2013). Transit and police departments can create safer

routes to school. Community groups and organizations can offer childcare, community communication, or mentoring to reduce absenteeism.

Administrators need to reach up to their district leaders. While an individual school can attempt to attack this problem, a superintendent can make this epidemic a priority for all schools in the district. The district leaders can provide attendance clerks to facilitate collection of data or other professional support so teachers or administrators can implement an accountability system.

In Chapter III, the population for the study will be defined and methods of data collection will be determined. The methods and procedures that were used to treat the data involved in this research study as well as the statistical analysis of data will be detailed.

Chapter III

Methods and Procedures

The problem of this study was to examine the effect of senior-level student absences on class rank. In order to determine this, the entire population's data were selected, collected, and tabulated, and statistically analyzed.

Population

The population of this student was graduates who obtained an advanced, standard, or special diploma from Hermitage High School in May of 2013. The number of senior-level students who were identified to participate in this study was 389 of which 202 senior-level students were female and 187 senior-level students male. Attendance and class rank information were obtained from Hermitage High School's Records Room. The reason for choosing this population was so the study would present findings of a variety of students. During the 2012-13 school year, Hermitage High School serviced senior-level students from many different racial and ethnic categories; approximately 64% were minority (Hermitage High Overview, 2014). Of those represented were Hispanic/Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, African American or Black, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White students. About 43% of Hermitage High School students are economically disadvantaged, however the school does not receive Title 1 funding (Hermitage High Overview, 2014).

Methods of Data Collection

The method of data collection that was used in this study was the examination and analysis of existing data. The high school's Registrar provided data records, excluding student names, social security numbers, and other personal information, that reflected

only the students' class rank, determined by the students' GPA, and the number of absences for the 2012-13 school year. From this population, two sets of data were collected. The first data were the student's attendance records, (i.e., how many absences had been recorded by the school's attendance secretary from the beginning of their senior year until February 15 of same school year). The second set of data collected were the students' official GPA as of February 15, 2013. These two data sets were utilized to see if students who had more absences from school had a lower class rank.

Statistical Analysis

Once the data had been collected and tabulated, statistical analyses were performed to produce findings. The statistical methodology used in this study was Pearson's r Correlation Coefficient, commonly referred to as Pearson's r, and used to determine the significance relationship between senior-level absences and cumulative GPA which is used to determine class rank.

Summary

This chapter described the methods and procedures used to gather information on senior-level students' absenteeism and class ranking. The population was defined as senior-level high school students at Hermitage High School in Richmond, Virginia, with the following demographics: approximately 64% minority representing Hispanic/Latino (8.1%), American Indian or Alaska Native (less than 1%), Asian (6.1%), African American or Black (42.2%), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (less than 1%), and White (42.0%). About 43% of Hermitage High School students are economically disadvantaged, however the school does not receive Title 1 funding (Hermitage High Overview, 2014). Chapter III also explained the method of data collection from Hermitage High School's Counseling Department and the process of statistical analysis.

Chapter IV will disclose the findings and specific observations from the data collected through this research study.

Chapter IV

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of senior-level student absences on class ranking as measured by GPA. This was done to determine if senior-level high school students with high absenteeism will have a lower senior class rank than students with low absenteeism. Chapter IV will describe the findings that were collected from the data and compared using Pearson's r.

Data Collection

The number of days of students' absences for the senior class of Hermitage High School ranged from 0 to 64 days. The senior class rank ranged from 1 to 397; however, only 392 students received a class ranking due to lack of data for five students. Data collected from the 392 senior-level high school students of Hermitage High School were reported in the Appendix and categorized by decile and presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Absenteeism Comparison by Class Ranking (2013)

Decile	N	Mean Days Absent	S.D.	Absent Less Than 10 Days
1st	41	8.0	4.15	70.7%
2nd	40	7.9	5.44	67.5%
3rd	39	9.8	8.84	62.5%
4th	38	9.8	8.42	57.9%
5th	40	9.1	7.25	65.0%
6th	40	11.6	6.68	50.0%
7th	39	13.6	11.89	43.6%
8th	40	12.8	12.67	55.0%
9th	39	13.0	7.46	35.9%
10th	36	11.9	8.47	38.9%

*12th Grade class rank

Data revealed that of the 392 students in the population, 198 students are in the top 50 percentile of the class averaging 8.9 missed days during the given period and 194 senior-level students in the bottom 50 percentile averaged 12.4 days. According to the data findings, as GPA lowered and student decile increased, the average days absent increased or the percent of students with fewer absences increased.

Research Hypothesis

Pearson's r was the statistical analysis tool used to analyze this study's data. At the r-value of -.66, the Table of Magnitude is r = -.66 and it is suggested that there is a moderate level of reverse correlation (.40-.70) between senior-level absenteeism and class ranking. Consequently, when one variable increases, the other decreases.

Summary

In Chapter IV, it was discovered that there was a reverse correlation at a moderate level better the two variables used in this research study. The data revealed that as student absences increased, student GPA decreased as did class rank. On the contrary, students with higher class rankings and GPAs had lower absenteeism. Based upon the findings of Chapter IV, Chapter V presented a summary of what can be said about the findings relative to student absenteeism and class rank. Chapter V also made conclusions and recommendations regarding the overall analysis of this research study.

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the content of this research study as well as report conclusions based upon the data collected. The hypothesis set forth in the research study will be reexamined based upon the findings analyzed. The researcher will then propose recommendations for future studies based on these results.

Summary

The problem of this study was to examine the effect of senior-level student absences on senior-class rank. It was hypothesized that senior-level high school students with high absenteeism will have a lower senior class rank than students with low absenteeism.

The significance of this study can be seen partly in the fact that student absenteeism is a continuous problem that has been recorded as far back as the fourteenth century and is still prevalent today in secondary schools. Students that have higher absenteeism tend to have lower grades resulting in lower GPAs and class ranking, which can affect postsecondary education and success. Schools that have high numbers of students with chronic absenteeism are inclined to have higher dropout rates, lower graduation rates, and lower testing scores, which can result in schools losing accreditation and funding. School division members, administration, faculty, and staff are aware of the long-lasting effects resulting from student absenteeism.

This study of 392 senior-level students of the school year 2012-13 was conducted at Hermitage High School in Richmond, Virginia, a part of Henrico County Public Schools system. It was assumed that absences were properly tracked by each school and

connected to each student's identification number in the event a student changed schools within the district during the school year. Senior class rank is based on students classified as seniors' GPAs and is determined by the school's counseling department. Senior-level students officially withdrawn from Hermitage to attend another high school or program prior to class ranking on February 15, 2013, were excluded. Senior-level students that graduated from Hermitage High School in the summer of 2013 were excluded from this study. Students who obtained another diploma authorized by the Board of Education during his or her senior year were included in this study (e.g., special diploma, modified diploma, advanced diploma). Senior level students who dropped out or did not graduate after February 15, 2013, the date the senior class was ranked, were included in this study. Also assumed was that all students were made aware and agreed to the Henrico County Code of Conduct Attendance Policy which highlights the school division's policy on Excessive and Unexcused Tardies or Absences to School or Class, Compulsory Attendance, and Truancy.

The school's Registrar and Counseling Director provided student GPA, class ranking, and attendance records for the senior-level students for the 2012-13 school year. These data would be compared to determine if change in one variable effects the other variable. The data supplied were analyzed to reveal what the students' class ranking were relative to the number of recorded absences for the given year. The hypothesis was that senior-level high school students with higher absences will have a lower senior class ranking measured by GPA than students with fewer absences. The data on student absences and class rank were presented for all 392 students. A Pearson's r statistical analysis was performed indicating whether or not there was a correlation between the two

variables in question.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this study are based on the data collected. The hypothesis of this research study suggested that senior-level high school students who have higher absences would have a lower GPA and class rank than senior-level students who were absence fewer days. The findings from the data collected supported the hypothesis. According to the data analyzed in this research study, the Pearson's r for this data was -.66. The degree of freedom was 392. At the r-value of -.66, from the Level of Significance, we accept the hypothesis at the $p<.01 = 0.00001$ ($R = -.66$, $n = 389$, $p = 0.01$). From the Table of Magnitude, $r = -.66$, we may say there is a moderate level of reverse correlation (.40-.70) between the two variables of student absenteeism and GPA. Therefore, it can be concluded that senior-level high school students who have fewer absences will show a moderate reverse correlation to higher GPA and class ranking.

Findings were also compared to findings from Joseph Levanto's 1975 study showing similarities and proving hypothesis. When Levanto's Table 1 was compared to this study's findings represented in Table 2, even though both studies were conducted with more than 35 years between them and different populations, results still showed that absences increased or students with fewer absences decreased as class ranking increased, seen in Table 3.

Recommendations

Studies on student absenteeism and class rank such as those done by Levanto (1975) and Balfanz and Byrnes (2012, 2013) indicated that when students miss

Table 3

Absenteeism by Class Ranking Study Comparison

Levanto (1975)					This Study (2013)				
Decile	N	Mean Days Absent	S.D.	Absent Less Than 10 Days	Decile	N	Mean Days Absent	S.D.	Absent Less Than 10 Days
1st	41	8.0	4.15	70.7%	1st	65	11.7	10.33	47.7%
2nd	40	7.9	5.44	67.5%	2nd	62	14.6	10.84	37.1%
3rd	39	9.8	8.84	62.5%	3rd	67	16.1	13.42	35.8%
4th	38	9.8	8.42	57.9%	4th	58	18.1	15.23	29.3%
5th	40	9.1	7.25	65.0%	5th	64	16.2	12.74	29.7%
6th	40	11.6	6.68	50.0%	6th	61	20.3	12.13	19.7%
7th	39	13.6	11.89	43.6%	7th	63	23.9	13.69	11.1%
8th	40	12.8	12.67	55.0%	8th	61	24.5	15.32	19.6%
9th	39	13.0	7.46	35.9%	9th	62	30.5	20.21	11.3%
10th	36	11.9	8.47	38.9%	10th	62	34.8	19.88	9.7%

*12th Grade class rank

academic instruction due to tardiness and/or absenteeism, their grades suffer. As seen from prior research and the findings of this study, it has been consistently shown that as students become more and truant resulting in chronic absenteeism, academic success, such as GPA and class ranking, decrease. By comparing the same variables with different populations during different time periods, it is clear that absenteeism affects class ranking.

It is recommended that future researchers who study these two variables investigate why students are excessively absent from class. What reasons do they give to instructors, fellow classmates, and administrators? Are students oversleeping? Are they oversleeping because of laziness, work schedules, or family obligation? Are those reasons the same for each audience? How much does illness play a role in excessive absenteeism? How do students who are absence because of illness compare in academic

achievement and class rank to students that are absent for other reasons? Does transportation or child care assistance play in a role in absenteeism? Studies answering these questions could decipher if there is a correlation to the reason students are absent and their class rank/GPA.

In addition to future research focusing on the reasons for student absenteeism, determining if absenteeism is subject or teacher related might pinpoint the problem. It could create a breakdown that could influence an action plan catered to that specific subject or instructor. With that type of focus on a specific subject, the problem can be isolated, corrective action could be taken within the department and/or with the teacher, and change could take place.

The last recommendation for further research is the possibility of class ranking being eliminated from high school academia completely with the exception of the top decile. Prior research has shown that thousands of high schools have already retired class ranking due to the possibility of it doing more harm than good for their students. Although some colleges and universities prefer class rankings to compare applicants, it is recommended that all secondary education system stop providing class rank to colleges and universities collectively, therefore, a student attending or graduating from one school providing class rank will not have an advantage or disadvantage over a student attending or graduating from a school that does not provide that information. The student's GPA would still be submitted for consideration to higher education systems and according to research, attendance would still play a major role in that GPA result.

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Appendix

Number of Days Absent, GPA, and Class Ranking for 392 Senior-Level Students

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_1	0	2.64	174
S_2	0	2.59	188
S_3	0	1.35	347
S_4	0	1.45	357
S_5	0	0.86	393
S_6	0	0.81	395
S_7	1	3.18	99
S_8	1	2.88	154
S_9	1	2.78	182
S_{10}	1	2.19	221
S_{11}	1	2.05	264
S_{12}	1	1.96	279
S_{13}	2	4.54	19
S_{14}	2	3.90	45
S_{15}	2	3.86	54
S_{16}	2	3.91	58
S_{17}	2	3.83	62
S_{18}	2	3.58	77
S_{19}	2	3.56	86
S_{20}	2	3.23	98
S_{21}	2	3.28	112
S_{22}	2	3.19	117
S_{23}	2	3.26	123
S_{24}	2	3.19	128
S_{25}	2	3.05	130
S_{26}	2	2.66	170
S_{27}	2	2.53	197
S_{28}	2	2.12	248
S_{29}	2	2.05	266
S_{30}	2	2.13	269

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{31}	2	2.04	291
S_{32}	2	1.95	293
S_{33}	2	1.88	299
S_{34}	2	1.78	306
S_{35}	2	1.74	316
S_{36}	2	1.74	339
S_{37}	2	1.42	366
S_{38}	3	4.69	13
S_{39}	3	4.40	23
S_{40}	3	4.05	40
S_{41}	3	4.02	41
S_{42}	3	3.73	75
S_{43}	3	3.26	102
S_{44}	3	3.34	109
S_{45}	3	3.18	110
S_{46}	3	2.92	150
S_{47}	3	2.90	152
S_{48}	3	2.67	155
S_{49}	3	2.80	172
S_{50}	3	2.69	179
S_{51}	3	2.73	183
S_{52}	3	2.74	186
S_{53}	3	2.43	198
S_{54}	3	2.58	209
S_{55}	3	2.48	218
S_{56}	3	2.34	228
S_{57}	3	2.28	241
S_{58}	3	2.17	262
S_{59}	3	2.17	278
S_{60}	3	1.30	281
S_{61}	3	1.72	319
S_{62}	3	1.37	368
S_{63}	3	1.43	372
S_{64}	3	1.20	373

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{65}	3	1.13	383
S_{66}	3	1.23	388
S_{67}	3	1.20	389
S_{68}	4	4.58	20
S_{69}	4	4.31	27
S_{70}	4	4.07	33
S_{71}	4	3.77	64
S_{72}	4	3.78	65
S_{73}	4	3.71	70
S_{74}	4	3.65	73
S_{75}	4	3.56	79
S_{76}	4	3.63	80
S_{77}	4	3.62	81
S_{78}	4	3.46	89
S_{79}	4	3.39	95
S_{80}	4	3.25	100
S_{81}	4	3.41	103
S_{82}	4	3.26	122
S_{83}	4	3.10	135
S_{84}	4	2.89	146
S_{85}	4	2.65	189
S_{86}	4	2.55	211
S_{87}	4	2.42	214
S_{88}	4	2.34	234
S_{89}	4	2.19	256
S_{90}	4	2.15	285
S_{91}	4	1.86	295
S_{92}	5	4.66	14
S_{93}	5	4.35	24
S_{94}	5	4.07	34
S_{95}	5	4.04	35
S_{96}	5	3.88	47
S_{97}	5	3.64	81
S_{98}	5	3.54	90

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{99}	5	3.41	101
S_{100}	5	3.19	107
S_{101}	5	3.24	126
S_{102}	5	3.29	129
S_{103}	5	2.91	141
S_{104}	5	2.81	161
S_{105}	5	2.81	163
S_{106}	5	2.57	192
S_{107}	5	2.44	222
S_{108}	5	2.33	223
S_{109}	5	2.12	260
S_{110}	5	1.96	286
S_{111}	5	2.02	298
S_{112}	5	1.57	341
S_{113}	5	1.50	351
S_{114}	5	2.23	397
S_{115}	6	5.02	1
S_{116}	6	4.88	3
S_{117}	6	4.89	5
S_{118}	6	4.74	8
S_{119}	6	3.96	44
S_{120}	6	4.07	46
S_{121}	6	3.87	51
S_{122}	6	3.65	56
S_{123}	6	3.85	60
S_{124}	6	3.77	66
S_{125}	6	3.72	69
S_{126}	6	3.67	72
S_{127}	6	3.17	118
S_{128}	6	3.14	125
S_{129}	6	2.98	133
S_{130}	6	3.14	134
S_{131}	6	3.01	137
S_{132}	6	2.79	153

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{133}	6	2.79	164
S_{134}	6	2.56	191
S_{135}	6	2.64	193
S_{136}	6	2.57	195
S_{137}	6	2.55	198
S_{138}	6	2.59	202
S_{139}	6	2.60	207
S_{140}	6	2.48	216
S_{141}	6	2.42	224
S_{142}	6	2.33	242
S_{143}	6	2.08	253
S_{144}	6	2.19	270
S_{145}	6	2.13	274
S_{146}	6	2.04	277
S_{147}	6	1.96	290
S_{148}	6	1.90	309
S_{149}	6	1.84	310
S_{150}	6	1.68	327
S_{151}	6	1.51	351
S_{152}	6	1.27	381
S_{153}	6	1.31	385
S_{154}	7	4.75	6
S_{155}	7	4.69	12
S_{156}	7	4.19	26
S_{157}	7	4.24	29
S_{158}	7	4.10	31
S_{159}	7	4.03	32
S_{160}	7	4.09	36
S_{161}	7	3.95	39
S_{162}	7	3.90	43
S_{163}	7	3.80	52
S_{164}	7	3.45	88
S_{165}	7	3.40	92
S_{166}	7	3.29	115

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{167}	7	2.83	149
S_{168}	7	2.77	164
S_{169}	7	2.64	196
S_{170}	7	2.53	211
S_{171}	7	2.36	237
S_{172}	7	2.15	257
S_{173}	7	2.07	275
S_{174}	7	2.01	282
S_{175}	7	1.98	296
S_{176}	7	1.86	299
S_{177}	7	1.91	303
S_{178}	7	1.82	326
S_{179}	7	1.52	354
S_{180}	7	1.01	391
S_{181}	8	4.64	9
S_{182}	8	4.41	21
S_{183}	8	4.24	28
S_{184}	8	3.90	42
S_{185}	8	3.60	74
S_{186}	8	3.61	76
S_{187}	8	3.19	96
S_{188}	8	3.08	120
S_{189}	8	3.24	121
S_{190}	8	3.15	124
S_{191}	8	3.11	127
S_{192}	8	2.74	162
S_{193}	8	2.73	171
S_{194}	8	2.65	179
S_{195}	8	2.75	184
S_{196}	8	2.61	201
S_{197}	8	2.45	203
S_{198}	8	1.98	287
S_{199}	8	1.88	311
S_{200}	8	1.70	331

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{201}	9	4.60	17
S_{202}	9	4.37	25
S_{203}	9	3.63	84
S_{204}	9	3.32	97
S_{205}	9	2.76	177
S_{206}	9	2.46	208
S_{207}	9	2.25	225
S_{208}	9	2.43	237
S_{209}	9	2.12	271
S_{210}	9	1.94	314
S_{211}	9	1.67	330
S_{212}	9	1.68	340
S_{213}	9	1.46	349
S_{214}	9	1.47	359
S_{215}	9	1.32	375
S_{216}	10	4.89	4
S_{217}	10	4.74	7
S_{218}	10	4.78	10
S_{219}	10	4.62	18
S_{220}	10	4.40	22
S_{221}	10	3.88	55
S_{222}	10	3.74	68
S_{223}	10	3.41	91
S_{224}	10	3.34	104
S_{225}	10	3.29	105
S_{226}	10	2.95	139
S_{227}	10	2.96	145
S_{228}	10	2.57	147
S_{229}	10	2.94	156
S_{230}	10	2.79	157
S_{231}	10	2.55	178
S_{232}	10	2.77	181
S_{233}	10	2.29	243
S_{234}	10	2.36	244

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{235}	10	2.20	245
S_{236}	10	2.36	247
S_{237}	10	1.78	322
S_{238}	10	1.56	348
S_{239}	10	1.40	363
S_{240}	10	1.31	371
S_{241}	10	1.29	376
S_{242}	11	4.61	11
S_{243}	11	3.80	50
S_{244}	11	3.94	53
S_{245}	11	3.60	78
S_{246}	11	3.39	94
S_{247}	11	3.01	142
S_{248}	11	3.01	143
S_{249}	11	2.75	169
S_{250}	11	2.22	233
S_{251}	11	1.98	252
S_{252}	11	2.06	265
S_{253}	11	2.11	276
S_{254}	11	1.95	302
S_{255}	11	1.60	315
S_{256}	11	1.82	325
S_{257}	11	1.75	342
S_{258}	11	1.70	346
S_{259}	11	1.43	355
S_{260}	11	1.47	360
S_{261}	11	1.42	364
S_{262}	12	3.91	48
S_{263}	12	3.82	61
S_{264}	12	3.80	63
S_{265}	12	3.41	83
S_{266}	12	3.60	85
S_{267}	12	3.33	108
S_{268}	12	2.62	176

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{269}	12	2.47	215
S_{270}	12	1.90	292
S_{271}	12	1.80	313
S_{272}	12	1.86	318
S_{273}	12	1.74	335
S_{274}	12	1.53	353
S_{275}	12	1.42	360
S_{276}	13	2.75	175
S_{277}	13	2.59	187
S_{278}	13	2.23	251
S_{279}	13	1.95	301
S_{280}	13	1.39	362
S_{281}	13	1.43	369
S_{282}	13	1.31	374
S_{283}	13	1.39	378
S_{284}	14	3.51	71
S_{285}	14	3.00	131
S_{286}	14	2.95	144
S_{287}	14	2.91	151
S_{288}	14	2.41	220
S_{289}	14	2.20	231
S_{290}	14	1.86	329
S_{291}	14	1.73	333
S_{292}	14	1.65	343
S_{293}	14	1.39	365
S_{294}	14	1.02	392
S_{295}	15	4.66	15
S_{296}	15	3.95	37
S_{297}	15	3.90	38
S_{298}	15	3.66	67
S_{299}	15	2.72	168
S_{300}	15	2.28	226
S_{301}	15	2.00	288
S_{302}	16	4.87	2

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{303}	16	2.95	136
S_{304}	16	2.82	159
S_{305}	16	2.71	160
S_{306}	16	2.51	206
S_{307}	16	2.22	217
S_{308}	16	2.25	230
S_{309}	16	2.33	232
S_{310}	16	2.33	235
S_{311}	16	2.11	249
S_{312}	16	1.67	265
S_{313}	16	2.17	267
S_{314}	16	1.82	307
S_{315}	16	1.85	317
S_{316}	16	1.76	334
S_{317}	16	1.55	337
S_{318}	16	1.63	344
S_{319}	16	1.46	358
S_{320}	16	1.15	387
S_{321}	17	3.47	49
S_{322}	17	3.35	93
S_{323}	17	2.47	194
S_{324}	17	2.22	250
S_{325}	17	2.00	263
S_{326}	17	1.23	390
S_{327}	18	4.65	16
S_{328}	18	3.65	57
S_{329}	18	3.13	118
S_{330}	18	2.95	148
S_{331}	18	2.59	205
S_{332}	18	2.55	210
S_{333}	18	2.42	227
S_{334}	18	2.27	229
S_{335}	18	1.77	312
S_{336}	18	1.71	335

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{337}	19	4.10	30
S_{338}	19	3.35	114
S_{339}	19	2.91	140
S_{340}	19	2.67	166
S_{341}	19	2.61	190
S_{342}	19	2.52	200
S_{343}	19	2.39	213
S_{344}	19	1.92	289
S_{345}	19	1.63	323
S_{346}	19	1.27	379
S_{347}	20	2.35	219
S_{348}	20	2.24	236
S_{349}	20	1.91	279
S_{350}	20	1.47	355
S_{351}	21	2.09	254
S_{352}	21	1.87	297
S_{353}	21	1.76	324
S_{354}	21	1.73	345
S_{355}	21	1.03	396
S_{356}	22	2.25	240
S_{357}	22	1.78	320
S_{358}	22	1.23	382
S_{359}	23	2.24	245
S_{360}	23	1.67	327
S_{361}	23	1.18	380
S_{362}	24	1.94	321
S_{363}	25	2.82	173
S_{364}	25	2.37	204
S_{365}	25	2.17	258
S_{366}	26	2.31	239
S_{367}	26	1.91	259
S_{368}	26	1.18	386
S_{369}	27	3.32	87
S_{370}	27	2.59	185

ID	Days Absent	GPA	Ranking (392)
S_{371}	28	2.02	304
S_{372}	28	1.77	338
S_{373}	29	2.00	304
S_{374}	29	1.44	367
S_{375}	30	3.78	59
S_{376}	30	3.15	116
S_{377}	30	2.60	167
S_{378}	30	1.09	384
S_{379}	30	0.85	394
S_{380}	32	1.72	308
S_{381}	34	1.87	294
S_{382}	35	3.22	113
S_{383}	35	1.51	350
S_{384}	36	2.25	261
S_{385}	37	3.06	111
S_{386}	37	2.82	158
S_{387}	38	2.05	268
S_{388}	41	2.82	138
S_{389}	41	1.90	283
S_{390}	47	1.90	271
S_{391}	49	1.91	273
S_{392}	64	1.92	284