



## **The Relationship between Attendance Policies and Final Grades among College Students at a Private University in Dubai "Eighty percent of success is showing up" Woody Allen**

**Walid Salameh<sup>1\*</sup>**  
**Shatha Hawarna<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1\*</sup>Hamdan Bin Mohamed Smart University

<sup>2</sup>Hamdan Bin Mohamed Smart University

**\*Corresponding Author:** Walid Salameh

\*Hamdan Bin Mohamed Smart University

### **Abstract**

The aim of this research paper was to investigate the correlation between attendance policies and students' final grades, furthermore, it aims to investigate the need for a graded attendance policy and its effect on increasing class attendance. The method used to carry out the research was a mixed method approach in order to allow the researchers to capture both quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study to make it more efficient at offering solutions. This study proved that there is a strong relationship between both attendance and final grades. Since the analyzed attendance sheet showed the strong positive correlation between attendance and grades and the strong negative correlation between absence and grades, we might conclude that grades are strongly influenced by attendance. Hence, to avoid absences that lead to lower grades, a graded attendance policy can motivate students to attend classes and avoid absence.

### **1: Introduction**

Numerous studies have shown that frequent class attendees are more likely to earn higher grades than those who have poor attendance. According to Lukkarinena et al. (2016), there is a correlation between performance and attendance in class. The physical presence of pupils in the classroom, according to some academics, does not guarantee good student performance. Lower performance is not always the result of missing class. Students are more likely to succeed in their academic performance when they frequently attend classes, hence the attendance rate of the class is significant. When many students are absent frequently, teachers find it challenging to engage their courses and increase student participation. Students who miss school frequently not only fall behind academically but also have a higher chance of receiving poor grades. According to those who think that attendance is a key component of student achievement (Great Schools, 2017).

To fully experience what it means to be a student, it is critical that students participate in and attend the learning opportunities offered inside the classrooms. According to Allen (2016), being present in class is a key to academic success. He does, however, think that occasionally a student would need to miss a class. Missing a class in college entails extra work because there are fewer sessions than in high school. Because students can engage in all class activities when they are physically present, class attendance improves class performance.

Student attendance issues can have a significant impact on how well they succeed academically. However, it can have a favorable impact on their sluggish academic performance (McCluskey, et al., 2014). Chronically absent students may have a variety of causes for this. Similarly, low attendance rates and a large percentage of unapproved absences can hinder academic success and result in subpar academic performance (Zubrick, 2019).

In order to take the final test for a semester, a student must have attendance of at least 75%, according to study done by Jaykaran et al. (2011). There were two groups of respondents in

their study: pupils with attendance rates of at least 75% and those with attendance rates of less than 75%. The results demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean score between the two groups. When compared to those who attended less than 75%, those who attended 75% or more had a higher mean grade (unpaired t-test  $p, 0.0067$ ). In contrast, Adegoke, et al. (2013) found a poor association between student attendance and grades in their study on the effect of attendance on academic achievement. The findings indicated that pupils who miss class can still achieve excellent marks. Additionally, Crede et al (2010)'s meta-analytical investigation on the correlation between student attendance and academic achievement found that students with high performance have extremely good attendance, whereas those with the lowest marks are likely to have had very poor attendance. Additionally, it was noted that the gap in grades between students with low attendance and those with average attendance was greater than the one between those with average and extremely good attendance. Therefore; the aim of this research paper was to investigate the correlation between attendance policies and students' final grades, furthermore, it aims to investigate the need for a graded attendance policy and its effect on increasing class attendance.

### **1.1. Research Objectives**

This article has been designed in such a way that it achieves two objectives. The first purpose of the study is to show the relationship between the class attendance policies and the overall outcome of the student's performance. The second objective is to determine whether policies that introduce graded participation will also increase the frequency and number of students in attendance during class sessions.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

- 1- Is there a relationship between attendance policies and final grades?
- 2- To what extent can a graded attendance policy affect students' attendance and their final grades?

### **1.3. The Null Hypothesis**

In statistical measures, the null has been used repeatedly to propose a non-significance statement especially when two relations are being analyzed. The null hypothesis means that the variables under scrutiny do not possess any disparities. Consequently, the null hypothesis is thus valid until proven to be invalid based on the tests carried out on the samples. In our case, the null and unconventional hypotheses are as follows:

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>): Relations exist between attendance policies and final grades, and

Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>): Relations do not exist between the policies put in place for attendance and the overall grades.

### **1.4. Significance of this study**

Since the attendance - grades relationship is controversial in literature, it is worth researching this issue. The researchers, who have taught a variety of courses, have observed that the higher the attendance is, the higher the grades are. Hence, an investigation of the correlation between both variables will definitely show documentation of such relationship and to what extent they are related. The outcomes of the study will guide the researchers to determine whether to recommend a graded attendance policy to be implemented at universities or not.

## **2. Literature Review**

This research focuses on two issues that were raised by previous researchers. These two issues are directly related to the attendance forms in most institutions of higher education. The first of these issues provides an explanation as to the connection that links the attendance in class and the final grades of the students. Regarding this issue, the results of the study reveal that there is a connection between low grades and the failure to attend class. The second issue that is tackled in the article is that it revises all the studies that have shown no effect on the grades by student attendance. These studies, in this case, have provided other explanations apart from attendance, to show the disparity that exists between students in class. The data presented in this research should be enough to provide concrete records which will be used to validate these two differing views.

Students' academic performance and achievements are influenced by their class attendance and past academic performance. Research has shown that absenteeism positions a actual problem in higher education (Akumu, 2018). Furthermore, according to Fadelelmoula, (2018) class attendance is an indicator of academic performance. (Fadelelmoula, 2018). This is highlighted by Akumu, (2018) whose study revealed that absenteeism (Akumu, 2018). The correlation between students' absenteeism and academic performance has been examined by many scholars for decades. Research stated that in the US class absenteeism weakens students' academic performance. In his research, Kassarnig et al. (2017) examined about 1,000 undergraduate students in Denmark, and results confirmed a correlation between class attendance and academic performance. Furthermore, a study conducted by Teixeira (2016) revealed that absenteeism significantly lowers the students' final grades by about two points. The study of Pani & Kishore (2016) conducted in a British university campus in the Middle East revealed that the class attendance significantly impacts academic outcomes which implies that students with low performance are more affected by absenteeism compared to high performing students. (Pani & Kishore 2016). Additionally, the study conducted by Al-Shammari (2016) revealed positive correlation between academic performance and student attendance.

### **2.1. Attendance and academic performance in higher education**

The issues discussed above show the presence of a correlated function between class performance and attendance. According to Paisey & Paisey (2014), abundant research investigating attendance and its impact on students' academic performance on schools is available, however, this research on the same is so limited on universities (Paisey & Paisey, 2014). According to Akumu, (2018), there is a strong influence of students' attendance at any educational institution on their achievements and academic performance. These habits impact one's learning styles, sense of accountability, and ambition toward hard work. These social and behavioral features have a lasting influence and are frequently transferred over to the person's post-educational character (Akumu, 2018).

College students attendance is important for their personal development and academic achievement and is a decisive part of their educational growth (Mushtaq et al., 2019). Being frequently absent from college might cause missing essential learning chances, gaining new skills, and obtaining new educational and practical aptitudes. This pattern has a number of detrimental effects on pupils' future results, including drug misuse, criminality, and delinquency (Sanchez et al., 2015). Additionally, students who attend classes intermittently may experience academic disengagement owing to missed instructions and social anxiety due to feelings of underachievement. Soland et al. (2019) in their research revealed that academic disengagement starts as a self-management problem that gradually develops into chronic absence, which leads to course failure. Such disruptive actions increase the likelihood of dropping out of school and start a vicious cycle of absenteeism.

The research, however, does not make clear comments regarding the relationships, and new evidence has come to light concerning the non-significance of attending classes and the performance of students. These studies are described in this chapter.

### **2.2. Factors influencing low attendance**

Persistent absence has been associated with a number of detrimental academic and social effects (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2018). One of the best indicators of future school drop-out is poor attendance. According to recent studies, chronic absence is a greater indicator of dropout than poor test or grade performance (Gottfried, 2014).. According to Lukkarinen et al. (2016), there are more variables that can affect attendance, including the university culture, workload, instructional strategies, and the instructor. Students who were frequently absent in grades four through six are less likely to graduate, according to research on upper elementary classes (Smerillo, Reynolds, Temple, & Ou, 2018). Moreover, dropping out of high school is also predicted by academic underperformance in the early grades. Students who can read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to graduate from high school than those who cannot (Hernandez, 2012).

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

The method used to carry out the research was a mixed method approach whereby the author combined both qualitative and quantitative methods. The reason mixed methods were used is because the researcher needed to capture both quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study to make it more efficient at offering solutions. More often than not, the validity of the results that come from the use of quantitative research is determined on how valid the instruments used for the studies are and in what manner have they been utilized. Through this, it is available to explain numerical data in an individual phenomenon. Quantitative analysis is mainly used to simplify the activities that researchers have to perform when conducting their statistical analysis and the findings easier to formulate. On the other hand, the use of qualitative analysis focuses on the experiences that the sample under survey has lived. They help contextualize phenomena and, therefore, provide information which makes it easier to have an in-depth knowledge concerning an event over a period. Therefore, combined use of both methods will produce comprehensive results which are crucial to the process of decision making. Researchers can make qualitative theories and effectively tackle those using quantitative measures.

The population of the research was two **English for Academic Purposes-EAP** sections at a private University in Dubai. The total number of the participants was 30 undergraduate students. Those students have enrolled at the EAP program according to their level in order to improve their level in English and get the required IELTS grade that will enable them join their desired majors. The primary focus of this study was to decide whether their final grades are affected by their attendance or not, which will help us determine if there is a correlation between attendance policies and final grades so that a graded attendance policy could be proposed.

#### 3.3. Research instruments:

The two instruments which were exploited in this study were document analysis which included frequencies of absence and attendance and their final grades of the 30 students at the EAP Program all over the semester in addition to interviews of four undergraduate faculty members at the same program concerning the connection between attendance policies and final grades among college students.

#### 3.4 Research Limitations:

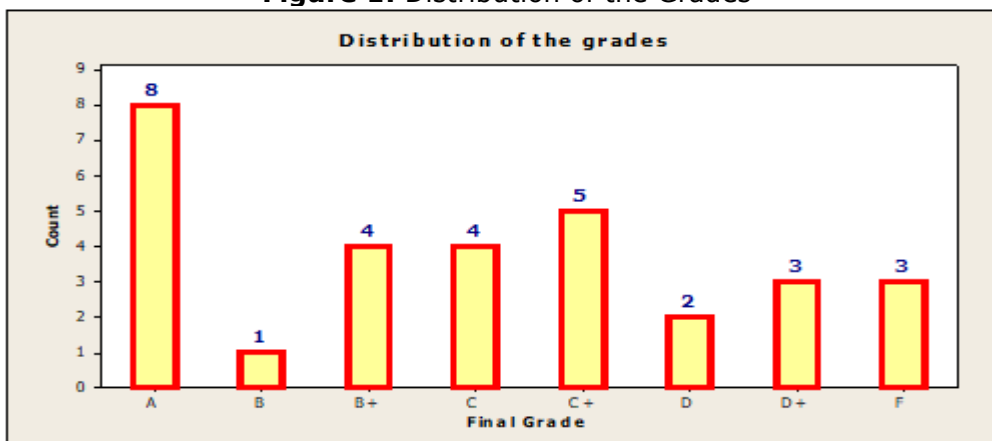
The results of this study cannot be generalized due to the small sample size who participated; besides, this study was conducted at a university that implemented physical teaching and not virtual one that make the results exclusive for face-to-face teaching rather than online teaching.

### 4. Data Analysis

#### 4.1. Document Analysis:

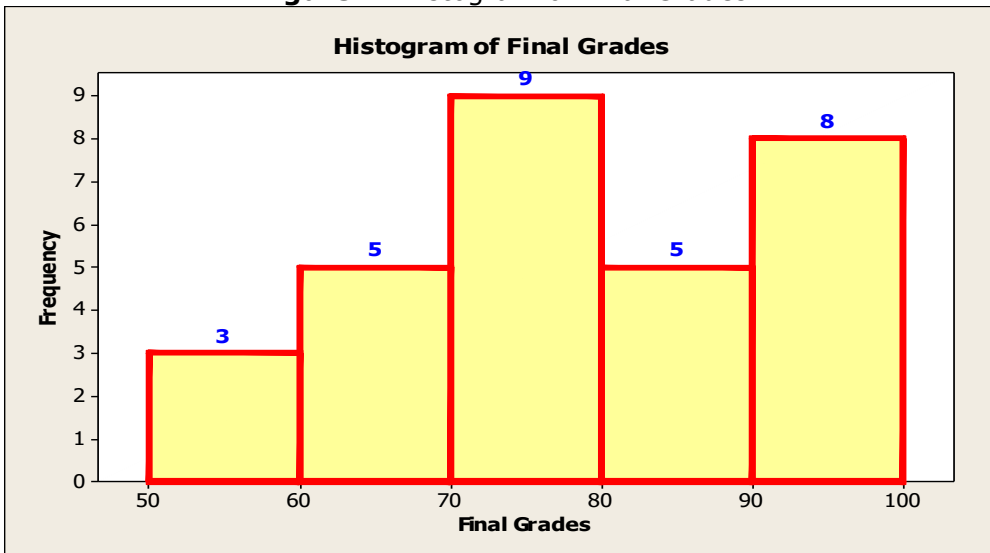
To analyze the relationship between attendance and grades, we explored the grades bar chart, histogram and scatterplot graph and calculated Pearson correlation between the attendance (independent variable) and final grades (dependent variable). We sketched the linear graph between the two variables, furthermore, we made a test of linearity between the independent and dependent variable ( p-value)

**Figure 1:** Distribution of the Grades



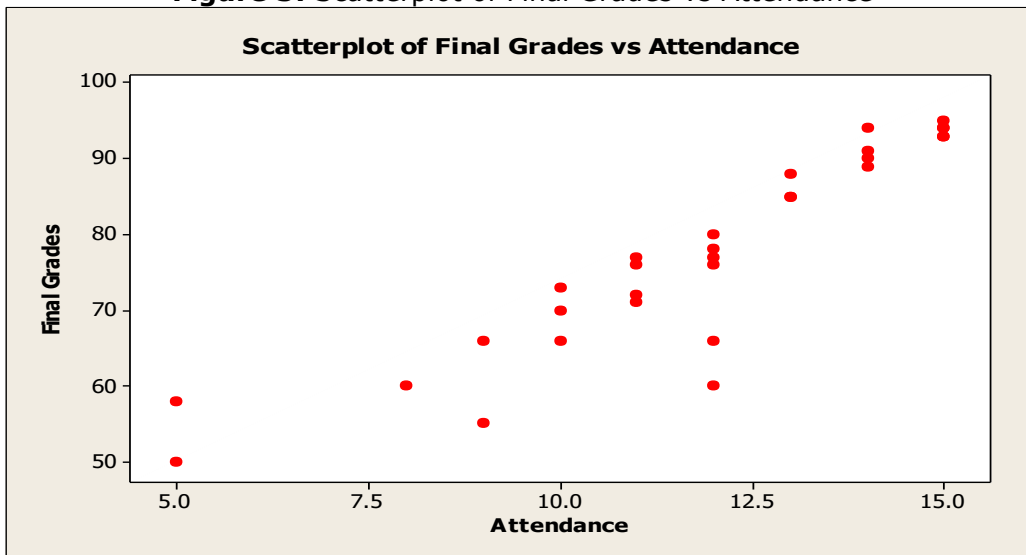
As it can be seen in figure 1, and through the distribution of the grades of students. We can observe that a grade of A got the highest count with eight students, followed by Grade C+ with 5 students. Grades B+ and C got the same count with 4 students. Similarly, Grades D+ and F got the same count with three students each. Grade D and B has the lowest count with 2 and 1 respective

**Figure 2:** Histogram of Final Grades



**Figure 2** indicates the histogram of final grades. We can observe that there are more students who got grades ranging from 70 to 80, and 90-100. The least number of students can be seen in the grade range of 50-60. Generally, the histogram is slightly to the left or negatively skewed.

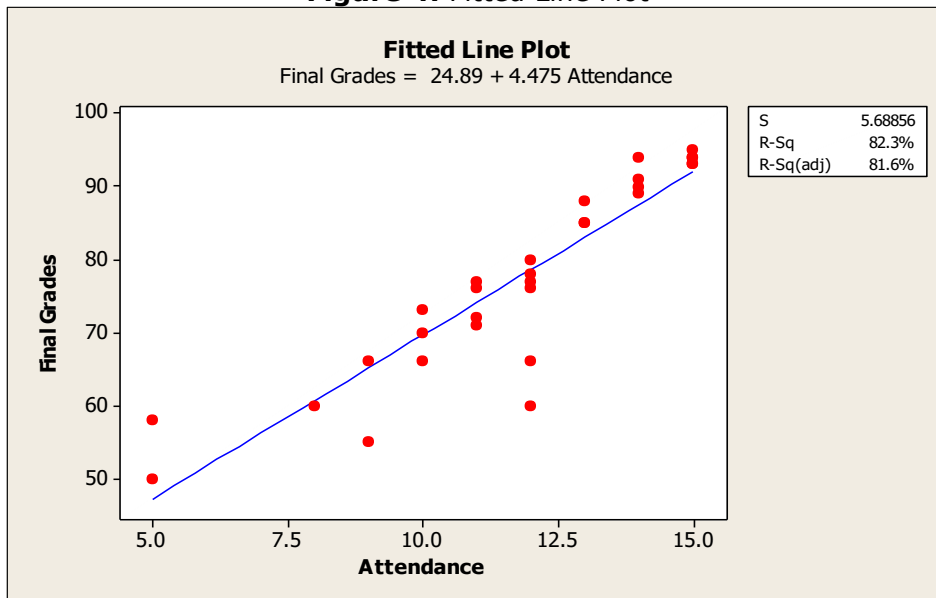
**Figure 3:** Scatterplot of Final Grades vs Attendance



**Figure 3** "The scatter plot" indicates that there is a linear relationship between the variables. Attendance is positively correlated with the final grades.

**The Correlation between Attendance and Final Grades** The result reveals a very strong positive correlation between the two variables,  $r=0.907$ ,  $p= \leq .05$ . This indicates that an increase in the percentage of class attended by the students corresponds to an increase in their final grades.**Regression equation between (best linear line)**

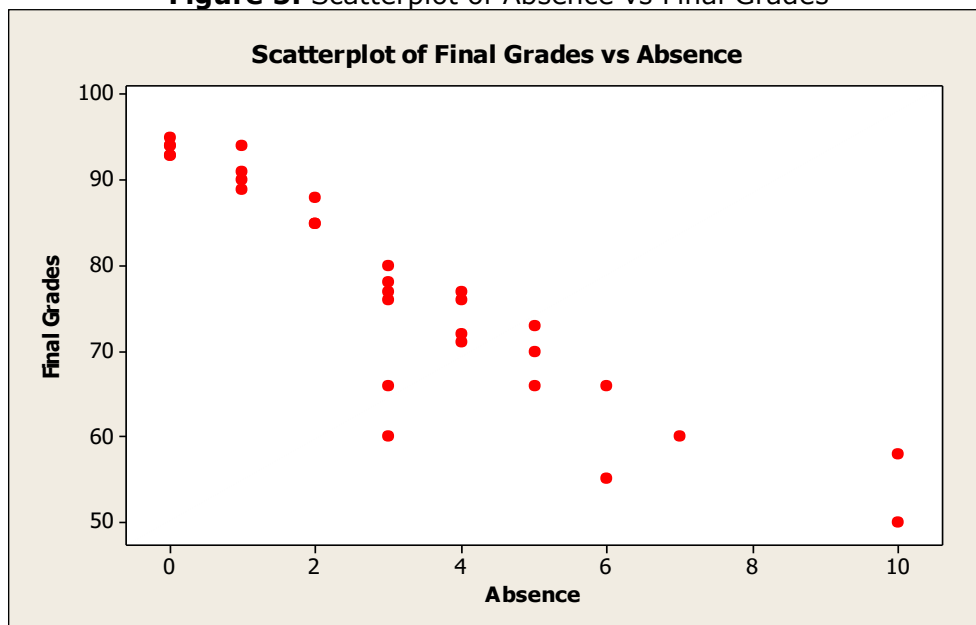
**Figure 4:** Fitted Line Plot



**Figure 4:** The regression equation shows that the coefficient for attendance in percentage is 4.475 grade points. The coefficient indicates that for every additional percent in attendance you can expect grades to increase by an average of 4.475 grade points.

**The Correlations between Absence and Final Grades**

**Figure 5:** Scatterplot of Absence vs Final Grades



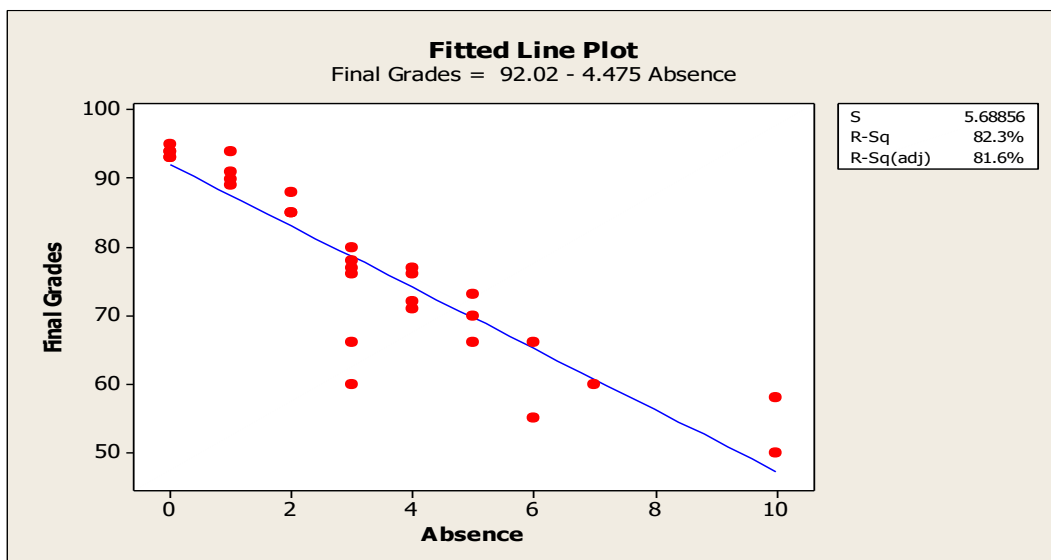
**Figure 5** “The scatter plot” indicates that there is a negative linear relationship between the variables. Absences is negatively correlated with the final grades. The pattern illustrates that as the number of absences increases, the Final Grades decreases.

Pearson correlation of Absence and Final Grades (r) = -0.907

Since r is close to -1, it means that there is a high negative correlation

Since P-Value is less than 0.05, there is a relationship between attendance and grades

**Regression equation between (best linear linear)**



The regression equation shows that the coefficient for absences in percentage is 4.475 grade points. The coefficient indicates that for every additional percent in attendance you can expect grades to decrease by an average of 4.475 grade points. Therefore, and based on the above mentioned, while the results revealed a strong positive correlation between attendance and final grades, it showed also a strong negative correlation between absence and final grades.

**4.2. Interview Analysis:**

The researcher interviewed four English language teachers and inquired about their views on the connection between students’ attendance and final grades. The four teachers used their experience and knowledge of students to measure the relationship.

**4.2.1. Is there a relationship between attendance and grades?**

All the teachers who were interviewed confirmed the fact that there is a connection between attendance and final grades. They added that through their experiences, such link between attendance and grades existed. One of the teachers expressed her opinion by saying:

*"There is to some extent. Student attendance will enhance their performance and content understanding because most of the explanations, practice, and tasks are completed and monitored by the teacher. Also, the interaction between teacher and student and among students is necessary".*

**4.2.2. What are the values of adopting a graded attendance policy?**

The teachers believe that such policy will enhance learning and one of the teachers stated that:

*"Such policy will give a chance for students to ask questions about unclear points, furthermore, gives an opportunity for students to interact, learn and share information with peers and teachers".*

Another faculty member highlighted what his colleague said by saying:

*"A graded policy will surely encourage students to attend which will result in better student performance."*

The responses of the teachers on the second question indicate that they all support the idea of a graded attendance policy for its benefits in their views. The five faculty members who were interviewed believed that a graded attendance policy will help teachers and students in the teaching learning process.

#### 4.2.3. What graded attendance policy can be proposed to increase the attendance and grades of the students?

Since all the teachers who were interviewed from EAP Program expressed their willingness to implement such policy, they had various views of the nature of such policy and what graded attendance policy can be proposed to increase the attendance and grades of the students. One of the teachers expressed his own opinion by saying:

*"Certain teaching and learning practices should be implemented to encourage better attendance. For example, in-class assignments, readings, discussions, etc. will make students attend".*

Another faculty member was more specific by saying:

*"Attendance should be 10% of the total grade. Oral presentations, and class activities can be included in the 10 %."*

Eventually, the faculty members who were interviewed and who responded to the three questions, believed that there is a relationship between attendance and grades, furthermore, they all agree that a graded attendance policy will help a lot in overcoming absenteeism.

#### 5. Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations:

The main aim of this research paper was to inspect the correlation between attendance policies and students' final grades, furthermore, it aims to investigate the need for a graded attendance policy and its effect on increasing class attendance. The instruments used all through the study were document analysis and undergraduate faculty members' interview. The findings of the document analysis confirmed a strong positive correlation between students' attendance and their final grades through both tools exploited in data analysis. The above figures illustrate the strong positive correlation between attendance and grades in addition to the strong negative correlation between absence and grades. The outcomes that are presented here reinforce the current literature. Some studies showed that attendance might be the most vital factor in impacting students' learning and grades. The outcomes of these studies confirm the relationship between attendance and student grades and discovered that the performance of the students is higher when they attended classes, Hence, this could be an indicator of enforcing a graded attendance policy. The data of such studies strongly explained a strong relationship between attendance and grades at a college. Therefore, the agreement between the findings of the current study and the literature review can positively answer and respond to the first research question which is the existence of a strong relation between attendance and grades.

The second research instrument which was exploited in this study was interviewing five undergraduate faculty members and investigating their responses concerning the correlation between attendance and grades in addition to proposing whether the effect of a graded attendance policy would influence attendance among college students or not. All of them believed that there is a correlation between attendance and final grades in addition to the need for a graded attendance policy that encourages students to attend classes, as they stated. This agrees with the findings of Paisey, C., & Paisey, N. J. (2014) who imposed a firm attendance policy on a certain class and kept only attendance records for second one. Then, the researcher compared test questions missed by students with their absence dates. Through this investigation, Paisey could illustrate that students missed exam questions from that class period which they did not attend. Additionally, Mushtaq (2019) found out that class attendance is affected by whether students are rewarded for attending classes, accordingly, proposing a graded attendance policy can definitely upgrade and improve the students' achievement.

Unluckily, several possible limitations related to this investigation of attendance policies existed. First, the study concentrated on EAP program students only. Grades of students enrolled in other programs were not considered as part of this study. Additionally, grades were investigated for only one semester time frame. Lastly, the study only tested information from one private University in Dubai and not all. More importantly, the attendance grade sheet which was investigated and analyzed consists of 30 students only at an EAP program, in other words, the findings and results cannot be generalized.



**Conclusion:**

The aim of this research paper was to investigate the correlation between attendance policies and students' final grades, furthermore, it aims to investigate the need for a graded attendance policy and its effect on increasing class attendance. This study proved that there is a strong relationship between both attendance and final grades. Since the analyzed attendance sheet showed the strong positive correlation between attendance and grades and the strong negative correlation between absence and grades, we might conclude that grades are determined by attendance. Hence, to avoid absences that lead to lower grades, a graded attendance policy can motivate students to attend classes and avoid absence. In other words, the study answered the first question about the existing relation between both attendance and grades which by default confirms and answers the second research question. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this research paper will guide other researchers in further investigations and to find solutions based on the findings of this paper.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the results and findings of this study, certain procedures should be taken into account:

- 1- Since there is a correlation between attendance and students' final grades, it is our responsibility as educators to always change our teaching methodologies to meet the needs of the students and to motivate them to attend classes by varying activities in the class that may break boredom.
- 2- This study has paved the way for future studies in this field to further investigate the different models of implementing such promising policy which could be, for instance, 10% in the form of presentations, seminars and class activities conducted by students.
- 3- The researcher is aware that attendance and achievement might both be caused by a third (as yet unknown) factor despite the fact that many research has been conducted on this regard.

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