

ENGLISH CLUB ABSENTEEISM AND PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES IN A VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

ABSENSI ENGLISH CLUB DAN STRATEGI PARTISIPASI DI SEKOLAH KEJURUAN

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Abstract

Extracurricular English Clubs are expected to provide students with additional space to practise English beyond regular classroom instruction, yet many clubs struggle to sustain attendance. This study investigated absenteeism in the English Club of an Indonesian vocational high school and identified instructor-centered strategies that may improve participation. One research question guided the study: what individual and school-related factors explain students' absenteeism in the English Club, and what strategies can be used to address the participation issue? The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design supported by questionnaire data from sixteen English Club members and semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants representing active, passive, and former members. The data were interpreted through thematic analysis. The findings show that individual absenteeism was strongly related to low self-esteem in English skills, anxiety when performing English, psychological fatigue, safety concerns, and difficulty managing competing activities. School-related absenteeism was shaped mainly by uncertain extracurricular schedules during school renovation, weak attendance accountability, the absence of meaningful sanctions, and students' perception that English Club attendance was not treated seriously by the school. Students preferred strategies related to respectful instructor behaviour, mastery of lesson content, varied teaching methods, confidence-building support, practical learning materials, and clearer operational discipline. The study concludes that absenteeism in the English Club is not merely a student motivation problem; it is produced by the interaction of affective, institutional, pedagogical, and operational conditions.

Keywords: Absenteeism; english club; extracurricular activity; participation strategy; vocational high school

Abstrak

English Club sebagai kegiatan ekstrakurikuler seharusnya memberi ruang tambahan bagi siswa untuk berlatih bahasa Inggris di luar pembelajaran reguler, tetapi banyak klub mengalami kesulitan mempertahankan kehadiran anggota. Penelitian ini mengkaji absensi dalam English Club di sebuah sekolah menengah kejuruan di Indonesia serta mengidentifikasi strategi berpusat pada instruktur untuk meningkatkan partisipasi. Satu pertanyaan penelitian digunakan, yaitu faktor individual dan faktor sekolah apa yang menjelaskan absensi siswa dalam English Club serta strategi apa yang dapat digunakan untuk mengatasi masalah partisipasi tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan

desain kualitatif fenomenologis yang didukung data kuesioner dari enam belas anggota English Club dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan lima belas partisipan yang mewakili anggota aktif, pasif, dan mantan anggota. Data dianalisis melalui analisis tematik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa absensi secara individual berkaitan dengan rendahnya kepercayaan diri dalam kemampuan bahasa Inggris, kecemasan saat menampilkan bahasa Inggris, kelelahan psikologis, rasa tidak aman, dan kesulitan mengatur aktivitas yang saling bertabrakan. Faktor sekolah terutama berkaitan dengan ketidakpastian jadwal ekstrakurikuler selama renovasi sekolah, lemahnya akuntabilitas kehadiran, ketiadaan sanksi bermakna, dan persepsi bahwa kehadiran English Club tidak dianggap serius. Strategi yang paling disukai siswa meliputi perilaku instruktur yang menghargai anggota, penguasaan materi, variasi metode, dukungan kepercayaan diri, materi praktis, dan disiplin operasional yang lebih jelas.

Kata kunci: *Absensi; english club; ekstrakurikuler; strategi partisipasi; sekolah kejuruan*

Introduction

Extracurricular activities are widely regarded as important spaces for students' social, personal, and academic development. They extend learning beyond the formal classroom and create opportunities for students to build confidence, practise cooperation, develop leadership, and participate in a community that gives meaning to school life. Buckley and Lee (2021) argue that extracurricular engagement contributes to students' confidence because it allows them to take part in activities that are not fully controlled by formal academic assessment. Rahayu and Dong (2023) similarly show that extracurricular activities support character education because they combine personal discipline, social responsibility, and repeated participation in meaningful group activity. For adolescents, these experiences matter because students often learn persistence, communication, and

self-management not only through formal subjects but also through optional communities where they choose to belong.

One of the most common language-related extracurricular activities is the English Club. In many Indonesian schools, English Clubs are established to help students practise speaking, listening, reading, and writing in a less formal environment. Malu and Smedley (2015) define English Clubs as regular communities where members meet to practise English through conversations, skits, games, and other communicative tasks. Liana, Sari, and Salsabila (2024) add that English Clubs are generally designed to encourage students to improve English skills outside regular class hours. In the Indonesian school context, English Clubs may also support students' preparation for language competitions, public speaking events, storytelling, debate, or other activities that require confidence in English (Ekawati &

Sarie, 2021). Earlier studies have reported positive effects of English Clubs on students' speaking confidence and English performance (Harisiswana, 2017; Kardiansyah & Qodriani, 2018).

In vocational high schools, the need for such a club is even more practical. Students are prepared for occupational pathways in which English may appear in manuals, digital platforms, workplace communication, hospitality encounters, design software, automotive documentation, electrical equipment specifications, and interview settings. For students who do not receive enough communicative practice in regular lessons, an English Club can function as a bridge between school English and practical English use. The club can also lower the affective pressure of formal assessment because members can rehearse speaking, ask questions, and make mistakes in a less punitive environment. That potential, however, only becomes real when students feel that the club is consistent, safe, and worth their time.

The problem is that these benefits depend on attendance. A club cannot develop communication, confidence, or belonging if its members rarely attend. Absenteeism therefore becomes more than a technical administrative issue. It becomes a

threat to the continuity of the learning community itself. Studies on absenteeism have shown that absence can negatively influence English learning because students lose repeated exposure, practice time, and social connection with learning activities (Bekteshi, 2020; Faustino, 2024; Zeqiri & Sadiku, 2023). Santibañez, Gottfried, and Freeman (2024) also underline that absenteeism should be read as a serious educational indicator rather than a small behavioural inconvenience. When this issue appears in an extracurricular club, the effect may be even sharper because the activity is often voluntary, scheduled outside regular class hours, and less protected by formal school accountability.

Absenteeism is commonly defined as students' non-attendance in scheduled educational activities, whether authorised or unauthorised. Cook and Ezenne (2010) describe absenteeism as unexplained school absence that occurs repeatedly, while Fredriksson, Rasmusson, Backlund, Isaksson, and Kreitz-Sandberg (2023) distinguish broader school absence from truancy. Although these definitions were developed mainly for regular schooling, they are still useful for extracurricular contexts because repeated absence from a club also interrupts learning continuity. The difference is that

extracurricular absence is often normalised because the activity is perceived as less compulsory. This makes English Club absenteeism harder to control: the absence may be visible, but the institutional will to address it is often weaker.

The extracurricular English club investigated in this study was located in a vocational high school, specifically SMKN 55 Jakarta. The club faced a decline in participation, with the number of participants decreasing from around sixty students to only a dozen active members. That decrease is not a harmless fluctuation; it signals that the club may no longer be perceived by its members as accessible, safe, meaningful, or manageable. The issue is strategically important since vocational high school students need English not only as a school subject but also as a practical communication resource for work, internships, digital communication, and future professional mobility. If an English Club remains but is unable to retain participation, then the school is lacking one of its most practical language-development spaces. Pretending this is mere laziness would be intellectually listless, which is apparently still a popular research disease.

Previous studies on English Clubs have tended to focus on their benefits, students' perceptions, and contribution to English skills

(Ekawati & Sarie, 2021; Harisiswana, 2017; Kardiansyah & Qodriani, 2018). These studies are useful, but they often examine the students who remain present. Less attention has been given to those who are absent, passive, or gradually disengaged. This is a gap because a club's effectiveness cannot be judged only from the experience of its active members. The missing members also tell us something important about the barriers, discomforts, and institutional weaknesses surrounding the club. Research on extracurricular participation has shown that participation is influenced by the quality of the activity, peer relationships, school support, and students' competing obligations (Ansoglenang, Thompson, & Antwi, 2019; Eccles et al., 2003; Schaefer, Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2011). Therefore, absenteeism in an English Club should be examined as an interaction between individual conditions and school-level conditions.

This study was framed by theories of absenteeism and extracurricular participation. Demir and Karabeyoglu (2016) classify absenteeism factors into individual, family, and school-related factors. This study focused only on individual and school-related factors because family factors were considered beyond the immediate reach of the English Club instructor and school-based intervention. Individual factors include

students' confidence, anxiety, health, sense of safety, positive school experience, and ability to organize themselves. School-related factors include the school's response to absence, rule stability, meaningful outcomes, and institutional records or climate. The study also used Delaram, Asefi, and Shams's (2016) strategy framework, adapted to the extracurricular context. In this adaptation, the strategies were grouped into instructor professionalism, teaching method and instructional media, classroom management, student engagement and support, and operational effectiveness.

The novelty of the present study lies in its attention to absenteeism in an English Club rather than a regular English class. This distinction matters because extracurricular absence is shaped by different pressures: voluntary membership, after-school timing, competing clubs, safety after school, instructor flexibility, and weaker institutional enforcement. The study also combines questionnaire patterns with interview explanations, allowing the findings to show not only what factors students selected but also why those factors affected them. The research was guided by one research question: what individual and school-related factors explain students' absenteeism in the English Club, and what instructor-centered strategies can be used to improve participation?

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological orientation. The design was selected because the study aimed to understand how students experienced absenteeism in the English Club and how they interpreted the factors that made them attend, withdraw, or become passive. Phenomenological research focuses on participants' lived experiences and meanings rather than only on observable behaviour (Taherdoost, 2022). In this study, absenteeism was not treated merely as a count of missing students but as an experience shaped by confidence, fear, fatigue, institutional signals, and students' judgments about whether the English Club was worth attending.

The research site was the English Club of SMKN 55 Jakarta. The school was relevant because the club had experienced a noticeable decrease in participation. The participants were English Club members and former members from different vocational majors, including Visual Communication Design, Electrical Engineering, and Automotive Engineering. Sixteen students completed the questionnaire, and fifteen of them participated in semi-structured interviews. One questionnaire respondent could not be interviewed because of scheduling and internet-connection

constraints. The participants represented active, passive, and former members so that the data would not be limited to students who were already committed to the club.

Two instruments were used. The questionnaire was designed to identify students' responses to individual and school-related absenteeism factors and to their preferred strategies for improving participation. The items were adapted from Demir and Karabeyoglu's (2016) absenteeism categories, Conel's (2022) additional absenteeism indicators, and Delaram et al.'s (2016) student-proposed strategies for reducing absenteeism. Because this study focused on extracurricular activity rather than regular classroom attendance, several items were adapted to fit the English Club context. The semi-structured interview was then used to clarify the reasons behind questionnaire responses. This was necessary because a percentage alone cannot explain whether a student is absent because of low confidence, schedule conflict, fear of going home late, or dissatisfaction with the way the school treats the club. Human beings, inconveniently, require explanation.

The data were analysed through thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns

across qualitative data. The analysis proceeded in several stages. First, questionnaire results were reviewed to identify the most frequently selected factors and strategies. Second, interview recordings were transcribed and read repeatedly to understand students' explanations. Third, meaningful excerpts were coded according to the absenteeism categories and strategy categories. Fourth, related codes were grouped into themes. Finally, the themes were interpreted in relation to the study's research question and the existing literature on absenteeism, extracurricular participation, and English Club learning.

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the analysis, questionnaire and interview findings were compared. The questionnaire provided a broad view of which factors were selected by students, while interviews supplied deeper explanations for those selections. The analysis also considered negative and minority responses, especially when several students disagreed with proposed strategies. This was important because the purpose of the study was not to force all students into one neat story, as if teenagers were spreadsheet cells with uniforms. Instead, the analysis attempted to identify dominant patterns while still acknowledging competing experiences and contextual complexity.

Table 1. Research Design and Data Sources

Component	Description	Function in the Study
Design	Qualitative phenomenological study	Explored students lived experiences and meanings of absenteeism.
Participants	16 questionnaire respondents and 15 interview participants	Represented active, passive, and former English Club members.
Instruments	Questionnaire and semi-structured interview	Identified patterns and clarified reasons behind students choices.
Analysis	Thematic analysis	Grouped recurring responses into individual factors, school-related factors, and strategies.

Result and Discussion

The findings show that absenteeism in the English Club was produced by a combination of individual and school-related factors. The most influential individual pattern was not simple laziness but the feeling of academic and social self-insufficiency, especially low confidence in English and anxiety when performing English skills. As shown in Figure 1, 56.3% of students reported low self-esteem in English skills, and 43.8% reported anxiety in performing English. These two responses were closely connected in the interviews. Students did not merely say that they were absent because English was difficult; they explained that they felt exposed, inferior, panicked, or afraid of making mistakes in front of other members. One participant explained that pronunciation difficulties made her feel insecure, while another described panic when speaking English in front of many people. These

accounts support Demir and Karabeyoglu's (2016) view that self-insufficiency and anxiety can become individual factors of absenteeism.

The significance of low confidence is important because the English Club is supposed to be a safe practice space. If students feel that the club exposes their weaknesses more than it supports their progress, they may begin to protect themselves by withdrawing. This is a cruel irony with excellent paperwork potential: the activity designed to improve confidence can accidentally become a stage where low-confidence students feel most visible. The interviews suggest that several students compared themselves with members who spoke English better. This comparison reduced their willingness to participate, especially in speaking activities. In this sense, absenteeism was not merely physical absence. It also appeared as psychological

withdrawal: students might attend, but remain silent, avoid participation, or stop seeing themselves as legitimate members of the club.

Anxiety was also related to difficulty concentrating. Around 37.5% of students reported difficulty concentrating, and interview data showed that some students connected this difficulty to their anxiety and panic when performing English. Others connected it to the teaching method, saying that the lesson was not attractive enough or that they lost interest when the topic felt too general. This finding indicates that concentration should not be interpreted only as a student trait. It is also shaped by lesson design. If the activity requires students to sit passively for too long, listen to long explanations, or follow unclear assignments, students who already struggle with confidence may disengage faster. The English

Club therefore needs practice-oriented learning that gives students manageable speaking opportunities rather than long explanations that reproduce the atmosphere of ordinary classes.

Health-related factors also contributed to absenteeism, especially psychological unwellness. A total of 43.8% of students reported psychological unwellness, while 25% reported physical unwellness and 25% wanted to take rest after regularly attending the club. Interviews showed that psychological unwellness often referred to fatigue caused by packed school assignments, other extracurricular responsibilities, student council duties, private courses, family obligations, or emotional problems with friends. This finding is consistent with Deci and Vansteenkiste's (2004) argument that motivation is connected to autonomy and psychological need satisfaction.

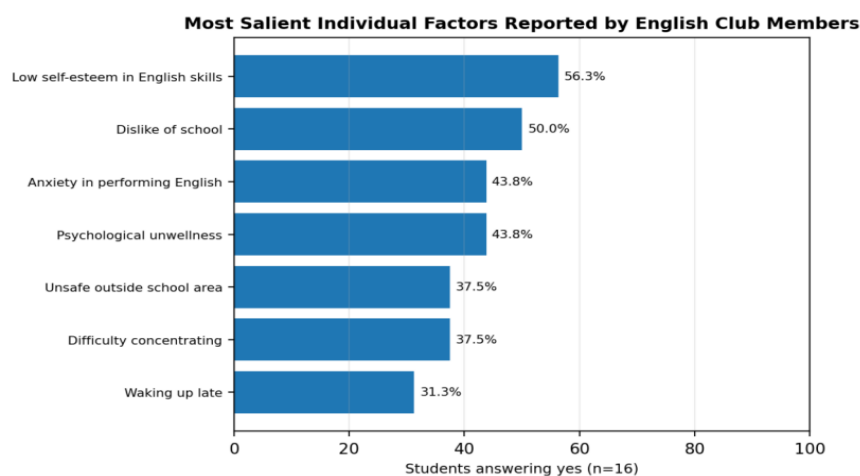


Figure 1. Most salient individual factors reported by English Club members.

When students experience the English Club as one more demand added to an already overloaded schedule, the activity loses its voluntary and enjoyable character. It becomes another task to survive. Safety concerns were another individual factor. Although most students did not select safety as their main reason, 37.5% reported feeling unsafe around the area outside the school, and 18.8% felt unsafe because they might arrive home late after the English Club. Interview responses linked this concern to local delinquency, gang fights, robbery, and the fear of passing dangerous areas after school. Some students preferred to go home immediately because staying for the English Club could expose them to risk. This finding is crucial because after-school extracurricular programs often assume that staying longer at school is simply a matter of interest. In this case, attendance was also shaped by geography, travel route, and perceived danger. A student who avoids a club because of safety concerns is not being lazy. They are making a practical survival calculation.

Fewer positive school experiences also shaped absenteeism. Half of the participants reported disliking the school, 31.3% reported disliking one or some teachers, 18.8% disliked one or some English Club members, and 12.5% disliked other school members. However, the interviews showed that not all

negative feelings directly caused English Club absence. Some students disliked certain teachers or school systems but still attended. Others explained that the school system, especially during renovation, affected their motivation because schedules became uncertain and students' needs were not clearly heard. This distinction matters. A negative school experience becomes an absenteeism factor only when it is connected to the club's schedule, atmosphere, interpersonal relations, or students' emotional readiness to participate.

The final individual category was students' ability to organize themselves. The most common indicator in this category was waking up late, selected by 31.3% of students. Some students missed online English Club sessions because they slept late after finishing assignments or other responsibilities. Others ignored English Club tasks or failed to complete them because of workloads from other extracurricular activities. These findings show that poor organization cannot be reduced to personal irresponsibility. It often reflects overloaded schedules and weak coordination among school activities. When the English Club competes with student council duties, other clubs, assignments, private courses, and family obligations, students' absence may represent schedule overload rather than indifferent.

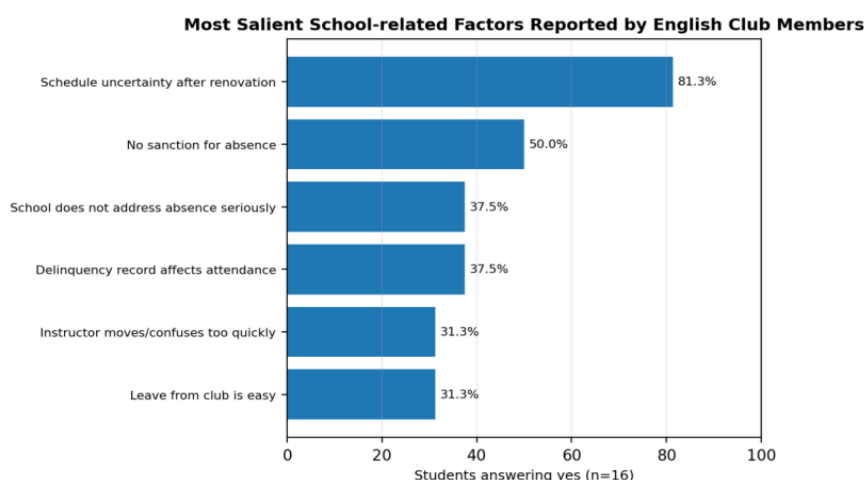


Figure 2. Most salient school-related factors reported by English Club members.

Compared to the previous factors, school-related factors were more structurally apparent. As shown in Figure 2, the most dominant school-related factor was schedule uncertainty after the school renovation, selected by 81.3% of students, which is the highest percentage among all factors. Students explained that the renovation changed the extracurricular system and created confusion about when and how clubs operate. Some students were flexible and stated that the English Club could continue online, but the majority felt that the uncertainty reduced their motivation and attendance stability. This finding shows that institutional disruption may damage extracurricular continuity. Since schedules are unclear, students face difficulty in building habits, specifically in attending the English Club.

The second important school-related factor was the absence of sanctions or weak

attendance accountability. Half of the participants reported that the school did not give sanctions when students missed the English Club, even though extracurricular participation was considered mandatory. Another 37.5% reported that the school did not seriously address English Club absenteeism, and 31.3% believed the school treated absence in other extracurricular clubs more seriously than absence in the English Club. Interview data strengthened this pattern. Some participants stated that attendance reports and extracurricular grades did not always reflect real attendance. Students who were rarely active could still appear as active members in records. This weakened the symbolic value of attendance. If active and passive members receive the same recognition, committed students may feel that their effort is undervalued, while passive students learn that absence has little consequence.

This school-level issue is not a small administrative detail. It tells students what the institution values. When the school does not monitor English Club attendance carefully, does not communicate clear consequences, and does not distinguish active participation from nominal membership, students receive an implicit message that the club is optional in practice even if it is mandatory in policy. This finding echoes absenteeism studies showing that school response and rule consistency influence student attendance behaviour (Conel, 2022; Demir & Karabeyoglu, 2016). In this case, the English Club's problem was not only student absence but institutional ambiguity. The club was expected to produce benefits without being given strong operational support.

Bad school records and safety-related school climate were also relevant. Around 37.5% of participants reported that students' delinquency records, including gang fights, affected their attendance. Some students connected this factor to the fear of going home late or passing by groups associated with delinquency. Although not all students experienced this problem directly, the perception of risk was enough to influence attendance decisions. This finding reinforces the earlier point that extracurricular participation cannot be separated from the

broader school environment. A club may be academically meaningful, but if the surrounding environment feels unsafe, students may prioritise physical security over optional learning.

The inadequacy of meaningful outcomes in the English Club appeared less dominant than schedule uncertainty or confidence issues, but it still mattered. About 31.3% of students reported that the instructor sometimes moved too quickly or explained confusingly. Interviewees mentioned lessons that shifted too quickly from one part to another, unclear task instructions, topics that moved away from English learning, or difficulty reading slides during offline sessions. Although these problems did not immediately make all students absent, they risked reducing participation over time. Students may tolerate a confusing session once or twice. If confusion becomes repeated, they stop believing that attendance is worth the time. This is where pedagogy becomes a retention issue.

The strategy findings offer a practical response. Figure 3 shows that students strongly preferred instructor-centered strategies. All participants agreed that the instructor should show proper behaviour and respect toward members, master the lesson, provide continuous teaching and attention to

learning progress, vary lessons across sessions, encourage confidence when students practise English, and promote discipline while keeping the atmosphere enjoyable. These responses show that students did not reject structure. They wanted structure with respect. They did not reject practice. They wanted practice with support. They did not reject discipline. They wanted discipline that was fair and meaningful rather than punitive theatre performed for administrative applause.

Instructor professionalism was therefore central. Students expected the instructor to behave respectfully, master the lesson, attend regularly, and control attendance. These expectations match Delaram et al.'s (2016) finding that students view instructor behaviour and preparedness as important for reducing absenteeism. However, some students also rejected overly formal assumptions about professionalism. A few participants stated that the instructor's appearance was less important than the quality of the lesson. Several also argued that slightly off-topic discussion could make the session more enjoyable as long as the instructor returned to the main topic. This nuance is useful. Professionalism in the English Club should not mean stiff formality. It should mean competence, respect, clarity, and responsiveness.

Teaching method and instructional media were also strongly valued. Students agreed that the instructor should provide practical and attractive materials, vary teaching methods, maintain useful existing practices, use teaching aids, and consider attendance as a plus score. These preferences are consistent with the function of English Clubs as communicative practice spaces (Malu & Smedley, 2015). Students do not need the English Club to duplicate ordinary English class. They need a setting where they can practise, receive feedback, experience successful communication, and feel gradual progress. One participant explicitly recommended that sessions should not consist only of explanations but should include practice after explanation so students can remember and apply what they learned. This recommendation is pedagogically sound because English confidence is built through supported performance, not passive listening.

At the same time, students' disagreement with some strategies shows that one-size-fits-all solutions would be careless. For example, a few students disagreed with using varied guest teachers because they feared confusion and adaptation problems. One student disagreed with heavy use of gamification or video because direct explanation was easier to

follow. These minority responses suggest that variation should be purposeful rather than decorative. Attractive materials are useful only if they clarify learning. Guest teachers are useful only if they support continuity. Gamification is useful only if it reduces anxiety rather than adds cognitive noise. Educational innovation is not automatically improvement; sometimes it is just confusion wearing a nicer font.

Classroom management strategies were also supported. Most students agreed that the instructor should initiate a cheerful classroom atmosphere, establish appropriate conditions for note-taking, and lead members to maintain a positive learning environment. This finding connects with students' earlier reports of anxiety and low self-confidence. A

cheerful and safe classroom climate is not cosmetic. For anxious learners, classroom atmosphere determines whether they dare to speak. However, students also noted that creating a good atmosphere should not be the instructor's responsibility alone. Members and staff also need to help maintain comfort and discipline. This point is important because clubs are communities.

Participation increases when members feel ownership, not when they become consumers waiting for the instructor to entertain them. Student engagement and support emerged as one of the strongest strategy categories. All students agreed that the instructor should respond properly to questions and encourage confidence during English practice.

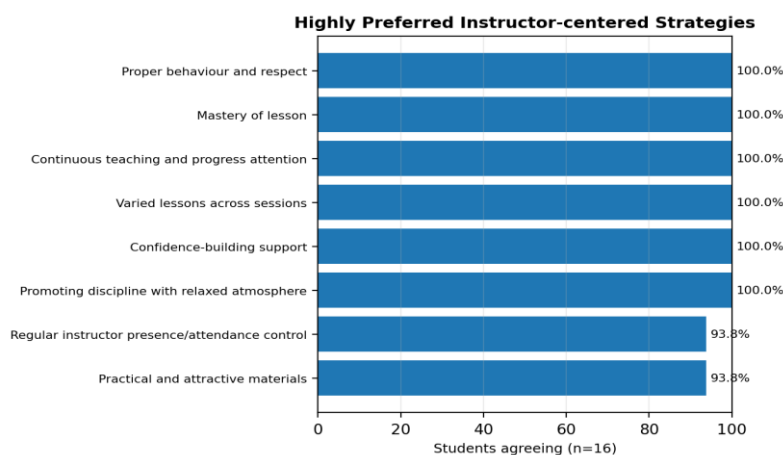


Figure 3. Highly preferred instructor-centered strategies for improving participation.

Most agreed that all members should be involved in discussions and that peer assistance could be used. These responses directly answer the major individual barrier found earlier: low confidence and anxiety. If students are absent because they feel inferior, the solution cannot be only stricter attendance. The club must provide confidence scaffolding. This may include small-group speaking, peer rehearsal before public performance, positive corrective feedback, rotating low-risk speaking roles, and explicit reassurance that mistakes are part of practice. Confidence is not built by telling students to be confident. That is not instruction; that is motivational wallpaper. Confidence is built when students experience repeated manageable success.

Operational effectiveness was the final strategy category. Students agreed that the English Club should promote discipline while maintaining a fun atmosphere. Most also agreed that transition time after school should be arranged more clearly and that attendance should be monitored. However, several students disagreed with reducing the permitted duration of temporary absence when members had other activities. They argued that some members had competitions, jobs, or other extracurricular responsibilities and should not be forced into half-hearted attendance. This disagreement points to a more realistic solution: the English

Club needs flexible but accountable attendance rules. Members should be allowed to communicate legitimate schedule conflicts, but the club should also require transparent reporting, make-up tasks, or alternative participation options so that flexibility does not become disguised absence.

Figure 4 summarises the analytical pathway of the findings. Individual barriers such as confidence problems, anxiety, fatigue, and safety concerns interact with school-related barriers such as unclear schedules and weak attendance accountability. Together, these barriers produce absenteeism and reduced participation. The appropriate response therefore has two sides. Pedagogically, the instructor must provide varied, practical, confidence-building learning. Operationally, the school and club structure must clarify schedules, monitor attendance, recognise active participation, and coordinate better with other activities. If only one side is addressed, the problem will continue. Motivating students without fixing schedules is naive. Fixing schedules without improving the learning experience is administrative decoration. Both are needed. The findings have several implications for English Club management.

First, attendance should be made transparent and meaningful. This does not mean punishing students automatically for

every absence. It means distinguishing between communicated absence, unavoidable schedule conflict, passive membership, and irresponsible disappearance. Second, the school should coordinate extracurricular schedules and avoid placing clubs in competition without clear rules. Third, the English Club should offer make-up participation options for students who miss sessions because of legitimate activities. A short reflection, recorded speaking task, peer practice log, or online activity could help members remain connected without pretending that absence never happened.

The findings also contribute to the literature on extracurricular language learning by showing that participation problems should be analysed before claiming that an English Club is effective. Many studies celebrate the benefits of English Clubs, but benefits only reach students who remain

inside the activity. This study shifts attention to the margins of the club: students who attend irregularly, hesitate to speak, compare themselves unfavourably with stronger peers, or stop joining because the schedule and institutional rules become unclear. In that sense, absenteeism is a diagnostic lens. It helps reveal whether the club is inclusive enough for anxious learners, organised enough for busy vocational students, and institutionally supported enough to survive disruption.

Pedagogically, the club should be redesigned around low-pressure practice cycles. A useful session could begin with a brief warm-up, continue with explicit modelling, move into pair or small-group rehearsal, and end with short performance or reflection. This structure would address the two biggest individual barriers: low self-esteem and anxiety.

Analytical Pathway from Absenteeism Factors to Participation Strategies

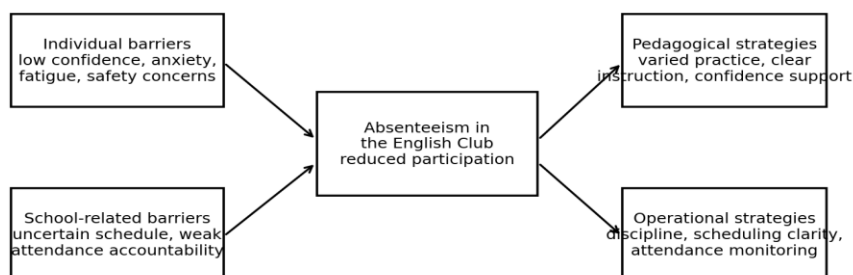


Figure 4. Analytical pathway from absenteeism factors to participation strategies.

Students who fear public speaking should not be thrown immediately into full-class performance. They need repeated micro-practice with feedback. Instructors also need to avoid unclear assignments because confusion creates avoidance. Clear examples, rubrics, and model answers can prevent students from skipping sessions simply because they feel lost.

The discussion also shows that English Club absenteeism should be interpreted as a form of feedback. Students' absence reveals what the club, school, and instructor have failed to make clear, safe, meaningful, or manageable. This does not mean that students have no responsibility. They do. But a serious analysis cannot dump the entire problem onto students and then call it character education. The findings show that absenteeism is partly personal, partly institutional, and partly pedagogical. Therefore, the most strategic response is not to moralise absence but to redesign the club conditions that shape attendance.

Conclusion

This study examined absenteeism in the English Club of an Indonesian vocational high school and identified strategies to improve participation. The findings show that absenteeism was shaped by both individual and school-related factors. The most

important individual barriers were low self-esteem in English skills, anxiety when performing English, psychological fatigue, safety concerns, and difficulty managing competing activities. The strongest school-related barriers were schedule uncertainty caused by school renovation, weak attendance accountability, absence of meaningful sanctions, and the perception that English Club attendance was not treated seriously by the school. These findings answer the research question by showing that absenteeism in the English Club is not a single-factor problem. It is produced by the interaction of affective vulnerability, institutional ambiguity, safety concerns, and the perceived usefulness of club activities.

The study also identified practical strategies. Students preferred respectful and competent instructors, clear explanations, varied and practical learning materials, confidence-building support, active discussion, cheerful classroom management, and operational discipline that remains flexible enough to accommodate real schedule conflicts. The main implication is that English Clubs need to be managed as serious learning communities, not casual after-school accessories. Schools should clarify schedules, monitor attendance honestly, recognise active participation, and coordinate extracurricular demands.

Instructors should design sessions that reduce anxiety and increase successful English practice. Future studies may expand this research across several vocational schools and include family-related factors, teacher perspectives, and longitudinal attendance records to obtain a broader view of English Club sustainability. The limitation of this study is that it focused on one vocational high school and relied on students' self-reported experiences; therefore, the findings should be read as contextually rich rather than statistically generalisable. Even so, the study offers a useful warning: an English Club cannot depend only on enthusiasm. It needs clear management, responsive pedagogy, and honest institutional support.

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