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## **COMBATTING EXTREME ABSENTEEISM OF GRADE 11 TVL LEARNERS USING STRATEGIC TASK-BASED AFFIRMATIVE REINFORCEMENTS (STAR) TECHNIQUE IN PRACTICAL RESEARCH 1 CLASSROOM**

**Blessedy Montellano Cervantes**

*Department of Education, Schools Division of Tarlac Province, Tarlac City, Philippines*  
[blessedycervantes@ymail.com](mailto:blessedycervantes@ymail.com)

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### **Abstract**

*This study aimed to combat against the extreme absenteeism of the Grade 11 TVL (Bread & Pastry) students using the Strategic Task-Based Affirmative Reinforcements (STAR) Technique in Practical Research 1 classroom during the second semester of Academic Year 2018-2019 at Tarlac National High School-Main. Anchored with the Incentive Theory of Motivation that states that the people can be motivated using extrinsic factors and argues that people are more motivated to perform activities if they receive a reward afterward rather than simply because they enjoy the activities themselves (Lumen, 2018), the researcher devised a new technique called Strategic Task-Based Affirmative Reinforcements (STAR) Technique which is a four-week extrinsic motivational procedure employed to the experimental group (students with five or more absences prior to the study) who manifested extreme absenteeism. STAR Technique involved four positive reinforcements to engage the students in attending their Practical Research 1 classes. Using both qualitative and quasi-experimental design of action research, the findings of this study showed that verbal reproof was not an effective strategy to minimize the number of*

*absences of the controlled group, while STAR technique significantly improve the attendance of the learners. Thus, learners most likely to attend to their classes if they are recognized and given awards.*

### **Keywords**

Extreme Absenteeism, STAR Technique, Extrinsic Motivation, Verbal Reproof (Formal Reprimanding), Grade 11 TVL Learners, Practical Research 1

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## **1. Introduction**

Primary and secondary schools all over the world have been facing problems in terms of the quality of students' performances for many years. The academic standing as well as the level of classroom engagement keeps on decreasing from time to time. One of the reasons that can be attributed to these issues is absenteeism.

Researchers even proved the negative effects of absenteeism among the students. In the study of Khalid (2014), he revealed that absenteeism affects class participation, coordination of students with teachers and peers and the grades of students. For Walters (2018), absenteeism resulted to limited educational instruction, poor academic progress, increasing disinterest in school and academics in general and decreased school budget.

In Tarlac National High School, most especially in the Senior High School, absenteeism serves as a crucial factor in the progress of the learners. The Technical, Vocational and Livelihood (TVL) track, in particular, usually experiences chronic absenteeism cases with students who have absences ranging from 3-10 days per month. More than half of the students from the TVL classes specifically the Bread & Pastry strand rarely attend their classes and some even just come to school just to take the quarter examinations. Some Bread & Pastry students also skip their classes to take a break since they have six-hour straight class time, and it will take them longer to come back to classes that lead them to be absent on that particular subject. This problem on absenteeism usually results to poor academic standing and slow competency development among the said learners.

Thus, this study aimed to combat against the extreme absenteeism of the Grade 11 TVL (Bread & Pastry) students using the Strategic Task-Based Affirmative Reinforcements (STAR) Technique in Practical Research 1 classroom during the second semester of Academic Year 2018-2019 at Tarlac National High School-Main. Specifically, it aimed to find answers to the following questions:

1. How is the attendance of the controlled and experimental group described prior to the use of the STAR technique?
2. Is there a significant difference in the attendance of the controlled group using formal reproof (verbal reprimanding)?
3. Is there a significant difference in the attendance of the experimental group using the STAR Technique?
4. Is there a significant improvement in the attendance of the controlled group using formal reproof (verbal reprimanding)?
5. Is there a significant improvement in the attendance of the experimental group using the STAR Technique?
6. Are formal reproof (verbal reprimanding) and STAR technique effective in combatting against extreme absenteeism?
7. What are the implications of the study to the teaching of Practical Research 1?

The following results were gathered in this study:

## **2. Attendance of the Controlled Group Prior to the Use of the Formal Reproof (Verbal Reprimanding)**

Extreme absenteeism is one of the crucial factors that hinder the academic progress of some of the learners under the TVL Track of the Senior High School Department of Tarlac National High School with absences for the month ranging from 5-16 days. As a solution, teachers usually device interventions to minimize the absenteeism of the learners. Both controlled and experimental groups consists of 18 students who manifested extreme absenteeism. Table 1 shows the attendance of the controlled and experimental group prior to the use of formal reproof (verbal reprimanding) and STAR Technique. It covers 20 days of regular classes prior to the conduct of the study.

**Table 1:** *Attendance of Controlled and Experimental Group Prior to the Use of the Interventions*

	<b>Control</b>	<b>Experimental</b>
Mean	8.11	6.44
Variance	11.87	3.20
Observations	18.00	18.00
t Stat	1.82	
p-value	0.08	
t critical value	2.06	

The result on Table 1 shows that the null hypothesis is accepted since  $t_{stat} < \text{critical}$  or  $p\text{-value} > .05$ . This may imply that the control and experimental group are homogenous as to the frequency of absences before the study.

### **3. Significant Difference in the Attendance of the Controlled Group Using Formal Reproof (Verbal Reprimanding)**

Formal reproof (verbal reprimanding) serves as a traditional intervention strategy that is usually used by teachers. It involves a one-on-one approach of the teacher in which a student who missed the class is asked by the teacher privately about the reasons of absences as well as reprimanding the student to avoid being absent again. This technique is usually done to remind the students of their attendance status as well as to provide them the consequences of their actions. In this study, the researcher regularly reminded the 18 students under the controlled group of their attendance status through a private talk and online messaging. Table 2 shows the significant difference in attendance of the control group before and after using the formal reproof (verbal reprimanding).

**Table 2:** *Significant Difference in Attendance of the Control Group Before and After Using the Formal Reproof (Verbal Reprimanding)*

	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>
Mean	8.11	10.17
Variance	11.87	18.26
df	17.00	
t Stat	-4.27	
p-value	0.00	
t critical value	2.11	

Based on Table 2, the null hypothesis is rejected since  $t_{stat} (-4.27)$  is  $>$  critical or  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ . This means that there is a significant difference in the mean number of absences in the control group before and after the use of formal reproof (verbal reprimanding), with an increase from an average of 8 absences before the use of the formal reproof (verbal reprimanding) to an average of 10 absences after the use of the said strategy. Thus, the result further signifies that the use of formal reproof (verbal reprimanding) in Practical Research 1 classroom does not lessen the number of absences of the learners but maximize the absences instead.

#### 4. Significant Difference in the Attendance of the Experimental Group Using the STAR Technique

Strategic Task-Based Affirmative Reinforcement (STAR) Technique is a new technique created and employed by the researcher to combat against the extreme absenteeism of the Grade 11 TVL learners under the Home Economics strand. STAR technique was employed for four weeks equivalent to 20 regular class days. The diagram of the STAR Technique procedure is presented below:

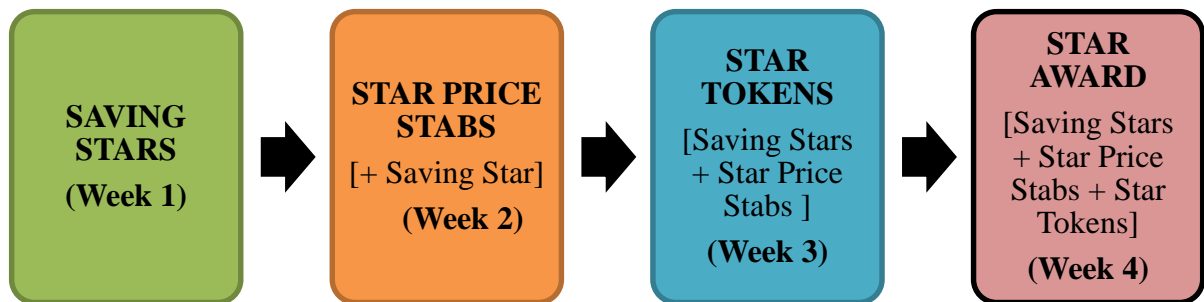


Figure 1: STAR Technique Procedure

The STAR Technique follows the following procedure:

- **Saving Stars**

For the first week of the STAR Technique, the learners were given a “Saving Star” for each day they were present in the class. The “Saving Star” is equivalent to five points that they can use to add from their scores in any individual activity.

- **Star Price Stab**

For the second week of the use of STAR Technique in the Practical Research 1 class, the learners were given an additional “Star Price Stab” equivalent to plus 10 in a group task for each day they are present, plus one “Saving Star” if they completed their attendance during the first week. If not, only the “Star Price Stab” was awarded to them.

- **Star Token**

In the third week of the STAR Technique, the learners were given a “Star Token” for each day they were present, equivalent to being exempted on one assignment plus a “Saving Star” and a “Star Price Stab” if they completed their attendance during the first and second week. If not, only the “Star Token” was awarded to them.

- **Star Award**

During the final week of the use of the STAR Technique, the learners were given the “Star Award” in a form of a medal once they completed the attendance for the four-week long during of the use of the STAR Technique plus one additional “Saving Star”, “Star Price Stab”, and “Star Token”.

This study utilized the School Form 2 as the primary instrument in order to determine the student attendance before and after the use of the STAR Technique for the experimental group. The class attendance sheets were also used to cross-check the data gathered from the SF-2. Unstructured questionnaires were also used in order to determine the reasons of the absences of the students and also their views regarding the use of the formal reprimanding (verbal reproof) for the controlled group, and the STAR Technique for the experimental group, as a way of motivating them to attend to their classes regularly. Table 3 shows that significant difference in the attendance of the experimental group using the STAR technique.

**Table 3:** *Significant Difference Attendance of the Experimental Group Before and After Using the STAR Technique*

	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>
Mean	6.44	1.06
Variance	3.20	2.29
t Stat	12.80	
p-value	0.00	
t critical value	2.11	

Table 3 shows the significant difference of the attendance of the experimental group as the null hypothesis is rejected since t stat (12.80) is > critical or p-value <0.05. The data on Table 4 shows that there is a significant decrease in the mean number of absences in the experimental group from a 6.44 mean before the use of the STAR technique to a decrease of 1.06. This most likely suggests that providing extrinsic motivation can lessen the absenteeism of the learners since this technique is anchored with Incentive Theory of Motivation that states that the people can be motivated using extrinsic factors and argues that people are more motivated to perform activities if they receive a reward afterward, rather than simply because they enjoy the activities themselves (Lumen, 2018).

## 5. Significant Improvement in the Attendance of the Control Group Using Formal Reproof (Verbal Reprimanding)

It has been a longed desire of the Department of Education to improve the quality of education among the public schools. However, it is still a challenge as to how to deliver quality instruction most especially to students who did not manage to attend their classes regularly. Teachers usually provide verbal reprimanding among those who missed their classes as a traditional way of notifying the learners of their attendance status as well as giving them warning as to the consequences of such actions. Thus, Table 4 shows the significant improvement in the attendance of the controlled group using the formal reproof (verbal reprimanding).

**Table 4:** *Significant Improvement in Attendance of the Control Group Before and After Using the Formal Reproof (Verbal Reprimanding)*

	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>
Mean	8.11	10.17
Variance	11.87	18.26
df	17.00	
t Stat	-4.27	
p-value	0.00	
t critical value	2.11	

The data on Table 4 reveals the increase of the number of absences of the control group after the use of the formal reproof (verbal reprimanding) since t stat is > critical or p-value <0.05. Thus, there is no significant improvement in the attendance of the control group using the formal reproof (verbal reprimanding). Tripod (2019) attested to this emphasizing that relative to other forms of discipline, reprimands are not the most powerful punishment. Teachers tend to rely on them because they are relatively easy to administer. However, teachers are at risk of falling into the "reinforcement trap." That is, reprimands may temporarily turn off a child's negative behavior but be ineffective in reducing the frequency in which the negative behavior is displayed in the long run.

## 6. Significant Improvement in the Attendance of the Experimental Group Using the STAR Technique

STAR technique was employed to help minimizing the number of absences among the learners. Table 5 shows the significant improvement in the attendance of the experimental group using the STAR technique.

**Table 5:** *Significant Improvement in Attendance of the Experimental Group Before and After Using the STAR Technique*

	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>
Mean	6.44	1.06
Variance	3.20	2.29
t Stat	12.80	
p-value	0.00	
t critical value	2.11	

The data on Table 5 revealed the decrease in the number of absences of the experimental group after the use of the STAR Technique since t stat (12.80) is > critical or p-value <0.05. Thus, there is a significant improvement in the attendance of the experimental group after the use of the STAR Technique. The findings on Table 5 also showed that extrinsic motivational tasks, as part of the STAR technique, worked very well in minimizing the number of absences of the learners. Psychestudy (2019) even confirmed this and claimed that extrinsic incentives can be used to motivate a whole group, thus increasing productivity or creating a better learning environment in classrooms.

## 7. Effective Technique to Combat against Extreme Absenteeism

Absenteeism hinders the progress of the learners as it can take the most essential part of their academic life- the application of the concepts in actual situation. Because of absenteeism, learners acquire insufficient mastery and understanding of concepts. Thus, this lack of mastery affects how they critically and creatively devise life-long learning applications. Interventions then play a vital role in minimizing the cases of absenteeism. In this study, the researchers employed two interventions: the formal reproof (verbal reprimanding) for the controlled group as a traditional strategy, and the STAR technique for the experimental group which is a new technique devised by the researcher. Table 6 shows the effectiveness of the formal reproof



(verbal reprimanding) and the STAR technique in combatting against the extreme absenteeism of the learners.

**Table 6:** *Effectiveness of Formal Reproof (Verbal Reprimanding) and the STAR Technique*

	<b>Control</b>	<b>Experimental</b>
Mean	2.06	-5.39
Variance	4.17	3.19
df	34.00	
t Stat	11.64	
p-value	0.00	
t critical value	2.03	

The results on Table 6 shows that the null hypothesis is rejected since t stat is > critical or p-value <0.05. The positive value in the controlled group implied the mean increase of absences (2.06) which further signified that formal reproof (verbal reprimanding) maximize the number of absences of the learners instead of minimizing the absences. Thus, formal reproof (verbal reprimanding) is not an effective technique in combatting against extreme absenteeism. The negative value in the experimental group implied the mean decrease in absences of the learners (-5.39). This signified that STAR technique is effective in combatting against extreme absenteeism as it minimized the number of absences of the learners. The data on Table 8 further revealed that STAR technique is more effective than formal reproof (verbal reprimanding) as an intervention in combatting against extreme absenteeism. This further implied that the use of rewards such as tokens, additional points, and medals (as part of the STAR technique) was effective interventions to minimize the absenteeism of the learners. The results on Table 6 also signified that the learners most likely to attend to their classes if they are recognized and given awards. According to Responsive Classroom (2019), publicly recognizing children’s accomplishments can benefit their learning and the overall school climate.

## **8. Implication of the Study to the Teaching of Practical Research 1**

Practical Research 1 is one of the subjects offered in the Senior High School among all the tracks offered including the TVL. Like any other subject areas, attendance is very important for the learners to pass the subject. However, based on this study, extreme absenteeism can be observed in Practical Research 1 classes. These absences greatly affects the performance of the

learners most especially of those who are under the controlled group since the number of absences even increased after using the formal reproof (verbal reprimanding). The learners in the controlled group always missed their individual and group tasks which is equivalent to 45 % of their grade as stipulated in DepEd Order No. 8., s. 2015 entitled “ Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Program (BEP)”. Although the learners had valid reasons of being absent, it did not excuse them from the lack of needed learning competencies based on the content and performance standards of the Practical Research 1 subject. Thus, at the end of the required 80 hours of teaching the subject, the learners under the controlled group most likely to possess insufficient skills as pre-requisite to Grade 12 subject which is Practical Research 1. For the experimental group, STAR technique minimized the number of absences of the learners. The findings implied that financial problems, health issues, and other problems that caused the absenteeism of the students were not the hindrances for them to attend their classes as long as they are well-motivated. Thus, proper motivation is necessary for them to attend their classes regularly. Extrinsic motivations, like in the STAR technique, are very helpful in combatting against the extreme absenteeism of the learners. Thus, Practical Research 1 teachers must be careful in planning a lesson as well as be resourceful in coming up with extrinsic motivational tasks to encourage the learners to attend to classes regularly not just because they will learn but also they will receive rewards for attending their classes. Thus, this will develop their understanding of the importance of attendance and that they can also assess their improvement in their academic standing because of their presence rather than in missing their classes. Revitalizing the reward system in the classroom is very important as it boosts the self-confidence of the learners and provides optimism among them.

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