

From Compliance to Care: Reconsidering Chronic Absenteeism and Student Well-Being in International Schools in China

Dr. James McLaughlin, DBA

Executive Management, 1TEAM Innovation

Abstract

Traditionally, chronic absenteeism in education has been viewed as a behavioral, disciplinary, or engagement issue, often addressed through attendance policies focused on compliance and punitive measures. However, these approaches can hide the underlying psychosocial and systemic factors that influence students' ability to participate meaningfully in school. This study redefines chronic absenteeism in international schools in China as an important early warning sign of student well-being issues in high-pressure global education systems. Located at the crossroads of international education, mental health research, and cross-cultural studies, this paper argues that persistent absences in transnational schooling often reflect accumulated stress, emotional exhaustion, identity challenges, and unmet psychosocial needs, rather than intentional disengagement or truancy.

International schools in China operate within a uniquely complex educational system characterized by high academic standards, intense competition for international university pathways, and culturally ingrained norms that prioritize academic achievement above all else. Students in these environments, both expatriate and locally enrolled, navigate layered pressures stemming from academic performance demands, cross-cultural adaptation, linguistic challenges, and familial expectations. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature related to school attendance problems, student well-being, academic burnout, and global education systems, this study adopts a multifactorial conceptual approach to distinguish stress-related absenteeism from the traditional notion of truancy. This highlights how chronic absenteeism frequently precedes the more visible manifestations of psychological distress, including burnout, anxiety, withdrawal, and disengagement from learning.

This study promotes a shift toward well-being-focused attendance models that emphasize early detection, preventive oversight, and supportive actions instead of reactive disciplinary measures. By situating chronic absenteeism within broader systemic, cultural, and institutional contexts, this study contributes to the growing body of international education research advocating for more comprehensive and ethically grounded approaches to student support. This research ultimately frames chronic absenteeism not as a failure of student responsibility but as an invisible signal of systemic pressure within demanding global educational settings, providing key insights for policy, practice, and future research in international schooling contexts.

Keywords: Chronic absenteeism, Student well-being, International schools, Academic pressure, China, Mental health, Transnational students, School attendance

1. Introduction

1.1 The Global Rise of Absenteeism in High-Pressure Education Systems

Chronic absenteeism has become a growing concern for policymakers, educators, and researchers across diverse national and educational contexts. Defined broadly as persistent or recurrent absence from school over a sustained period, chronic absenteeism has been associated with adverse academic outcomes, social disengagement, and long-term risks to students' well-being (Kearney et al., 2021; Fredriksson et al., 2024). In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasized that absenteeism should not be understood solely as an isolated behavioral issue, but rather as a complex phenomenon shaped by psychological, social, and systemic factors (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Kearney & González, 2022).

This issue is particularly pronounced in educational systems characterized by intense academic competition, high-stakes assessment regimes, and strong performance-oriented cultures. In such environments, students are frequently exposed to sustained academic pressure, limited opportunities for recovery, and heightened expectations from both schools and families. Research across multiple contexts has demonstrated that prolonged exposure to these conditions can contribute to emotional distress, academic burnout, and disengagement, which may manifest as increased absenteeism (Dalorno et al., 2022; Kong et al., 2024). Importantly, these patterns suggest that chronic absenteeism may function less as an act of defiance and more as an adaptive response to overwhelming stress.

Despite the growing recognition of the link between absenteeism and mental health, many educational institutions continue to rely on attendance policies grounded in compliance, surveillance, and sanctions. Such approaches risk misclassifying stress-related absences as misconduct, intensifying student distress, and undermining trust between students and schools (Kearney et al., 2023). This tension underscores the need to reconceptualize chronic absenteeism within the broader framework of student well-being, particularly in high-pressure educational contexts.

1.2 The Unique Dynamics of International Schooling

International schools represent a distinctive educational sector shaped by globalization, student mobility, and transnational aspirations. Typically offering internationally recognized curricula and pathways to global higher education, these institutions attract highly diverse student populations, including expatriate families, globally mobile professionals, and locally enrolled students seeking international credentials. While international schools are often positioned as innovative, student-centered, and globally minded, research increasingly highlights the complex pressures embedded within these environments (McKeering et al., 2021; Govorova et al., 2020).

Academic expectations in international schools are frequently intensified by competitive university admission processes, particularly in North America, Europe, and other highly sought-after destinations. Students may experience continuous performance monitoring, heavy workloads, and a culture of comparison that amplifies their stress and self-evaluations. For many students, academic pressures intersect with challenges related to cultural transition, language acquisition, social integration, and identity formation, creating layered vulnerabilities that can undermine their well-being (Ma et al., 2020; He et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the transitory nature of international school communities can limit the continuity of peer relationships and support systems. Students may enter or leave schools mid-cycle, experience frequent relocations, or navigate shifting social networks, all of which can impact their sense of belonging and their psychological safety. When these factors converge with high academic demands, students may experience

disengagement or withdrawal, as evidenced by attendance patterns rather than by explicit expressions of distress (Klassen et al., 2021).

1.3 Rationale for Focusing on China as a Context

China provides a particularly salient context for examining chronic absenteeism in international schools, given its prominent role in global education and a deeply rooted cultural emphasis on academic achievement. Over the past few decades, international schools in China have expanded rapidly, serving both expatriate communities and local families seeking global educational opportunities. These schools operate within broader societal environments characterized by strong academic competition, high parental expectations, and cultural narratives that strongly associate educational success with social mobility and family honor (Yan, 2023; Jiang & Saito, 2022).

Research on student well-being in China has consistently documented elevated levels of academic stress, burnout, and psychological strain among students across educational levels (Li et al., 2024; Dobosz & Hetmańczyk, 2023). Although policy reforms have sought to reduce the academic burden within domestic education systems, the pressures associated with international schooling, particularly those linked to overseas university access, often remain intense and poorly regulated (Qu et al., 2024). In this context, chronic absenteeism may be a subtle yet significant indicator of student distress that conventional performance metrics do not readily capture.

Importantly, this study does not seek to critique individual schools or cultural practices, nor does it aim to pathologize students or their families. Instead, it adopts a systemic perspective that situates absenteeism within broader educational, cultural, and institutional ecosystems. By focusing on international schools in China as a generalized context, this study aims to illuminate how high-pressure global educational environments can inadvertently contribute to well-being challenges that manifest through patterns of sustained absence.

1.4 Purpose and Conceptual Contribution of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to reconceptualize chronic absenteeism in international schools in China as an emerging early warning indicator of systemic student well-being. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature, this study distinguishes stress-related absenteeism from traditional notions of truancy and argues for a shift toward preventive, well-being-centered attendance frameworks. By integrating perspectives from school mental health, international education, and cross-cultural psychology, this paper contributes conceptually to ongoing debates on how schools can respond to student disengagement in high-pressure educational contexts more ethically and effectively.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Underpinnings of Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism has become a serious concern in educational research, but its conceptualization remains divided across fields and policies. Conventionally, absenteeism has been framed as behavioral nonconformity with expected attendance standards, with the most common understanding subsumed under broader terms such as truancy, school refusal, or disengagement (Kearney et al., 2021; Fredriksson et al., 2024). However, recent research has begun to challenge deficit-based models that place responsibility largely on the student, instead proposing multidimensional explanations that consider the psychological, environmental, and systemic causes of chronic absenteeism (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Kearney & Gonzalez, 2022).

According to Kearney et al. (2021), chronic absenteeism must be regarded as a consequence of other factors, including unmet mental health needs, school stress, and disconnection from the school environment. This reformulation is consistent with recent international findings, which view attendance patterns as dynamic measures of student well-being rather than compliance scales (Kearney et al., 2023). In this context, absenteeism is not always a sign of illness; it can also be a way to manage intense academic or emotional stress.

Similar comparative analyses of large datasets indicate that chronic absenteeism is overrepresented in systems with higher levels of academic competition and performance pressure (Fredriksson et al., 2024). These results highlight the need to place the concept of absenteeism within the broader educational ecosystem rather than treating it as a single behavioral problem.

2.2. Separating Truancy, School Refusal, and Stress-Related Absence

The key distinction in the literature is among truancy, school refusal, and stress-related absenteeism. Unauthorized absence without parental knowledge is often referred to as truancy and is associated with externalizing behaviors or a lack of interest in school (DalPorno et al., 2022). School refusal, on the other hand, is associated with avoidance, which is often triggered by emotions and accompanied by anxiety, depression, or psychosomatic distress (Ulaş & Seçer, 2024; Xie et al., 2024).

Recent theoretical trends indicate that such dichotomies do not capture the complexity of attendance issues, especially in high-stakes school settings (Kearney & Gonzalvez, 2022). The stress linked to absenteeism falls between two conceptual extremes: students may still value education, but they are psychologically overwhelmed by attending regular classes because of the pandemic's effects. This type of absenteeism can be mistaken for disciplinary issues, and in such cases, interventions may worsen rather than improve the situation (Johnsen et al., 2024).

This distinction is supported by empirical research in Chinese educational settings. Research on academic burnout and its psychological causes in students indicates that emotional exhaustion, anxiety symptoms, and withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism are highly correlated (Li et al., 2024; Kong et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2023). These results indicate that chronic absence may be an initial behavioral expression of internalized distress rather than oppositional behavior.

Table 1. Conceptual Distinctions Among Forms of School Absence

Dimension	Truancy	School Refusal	Stress-Related Absenteeism
Primary Driver	Behavioral disengagement	Anxiety or emotional distress	Academic pressure and burnout
Student Attitude Toward School	Often indifferent or negative	Ambivalent but fearful	Generally positive but overwhelmed
Typical Institutional Response	Punitive or disciplinary	Clinical or therapeutic	Frequently misclassified
Link to Well-Being	Indirect	Direct	Strong and emerging
Key References	DalPorno et al. (2022)	Ulaş and Seçer (2024)	Kearney et al. (2023)

Source: Synthesized from Kearney et al. (2021), Kearney and Gonzálvez (2022), and Ulaş and Seçer (2024)

Such conceptual distinctions apply especially to international schools, where attendance regulations are often based on uniform disciplinary patterns that fail to account for culturally mediated stress reactions or students’ transnational conditions.

2.3 Academic Pressure, Student Well-Being, and Burnout

Academic pressure and student well-being have been widely reported in education systems worldwide. Academic demands, competitive evaluation systems, and parental pressure have long been associated with elevated psychological stress, burnout, and emotional fatigue among students (Dobosz & Hetmanczyk, 2023; Kong et al., 2024; Ning et al., 2024). Burnout has been identified as a key mediator of the relationship between ongoing academic pressure and disengagement behaviors, such as absenteeism (Wu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

In Asian settings, these pressures are worsened by cultural values of perseverance, achievement, and academic excellence (Yan, 2023). While these values can motivate students, they can also reduce help-seeking behaviors and increase tolerance for high stress levels, further delaying the school's recognition of student distress (Hill & Seah, 2022). Research conducted in China has shown that, in most cases, students with academic burnout can maintain performance expectations until the behavior becomes psychologically manifest, which subsequently leads to absenteeism as a late-stage coping strategy (Li et al., 2024; Kong et al., 2025).

In addition to workload, well-being is determined by a sense of belonging, psychological safety, and perceived support in school settings (McKeering et al., 2021; Murray et al., 2024). When such protective factors are weak, attendance patterns can change even without overt declines in academic performance.

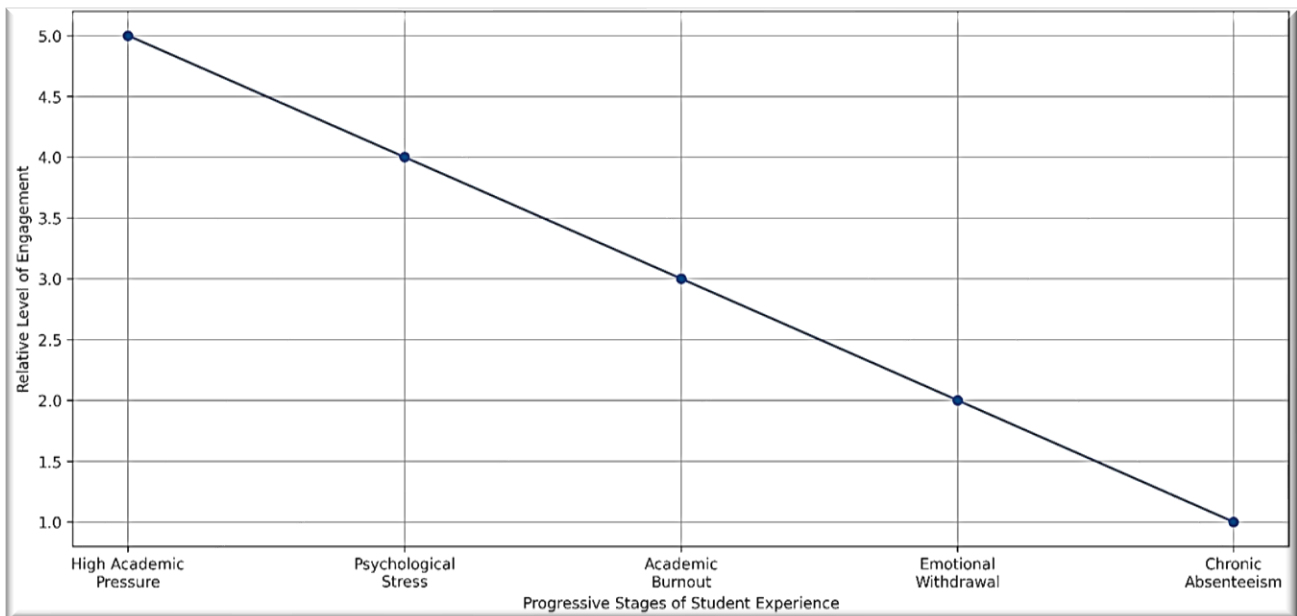


Figure 1. Conceptual Pathway Linking Academic Pressure to Chronic Absenteeism

Source: Conceptual synthesis based on Li et al. (2024), Wu et al. (2024), and Kearney et al. (2023).

This conceptual pathway will help us understand that absenteeism may be the final visible result of cumulative stress processes rather than a single choice to attend or not.

2.4 International Schools and Transnational Student Well-Being

Students in international schools occupy different psychosocial positions due to mobility, cultural hybrid-

ity, and identity negotiation. One study focused on transnational students, including expatriate and locally enrolled categories, and found that transnational students are particularly vulnerable to emotional distress stemming from the interplay of academic pressure, cultural transition, and identity complexity (He et al., 2023; Cao & Meng, 2022). Such dynamics are especially relevant in China, where international schools are situated within larger societal structures that value academic achievement and global competitiveness. Student engagement and well-being are influenced by acculturative challenges and language requirements, as well as by conflicting expectations between home and school (Ma et al., 2020; Klassen et al., 2021). Along with the demanding academic curriculum, these stressors can undermine resilience and lead to harmful behaviors. Notably, withdrawal may initially appear as intermittent absence and then develop into a chronic pattern (Klassen et al., 2021).

Increased attention to students' mental health challenges has not resulted in international schools being equipped with cohesive frameworks that integrate attendance tracking with well-being monitoring (Margaretha et al., 2023; Weist et al., 2023). Consequently, there is a possibility of dealing with chronic absenteeism reactively instead of proactively, and there is a limitation in dealing with it early in the process.

2.5 Chronic Absenteeism as a New Red Flagging Indicator

Recent literature indicates a growing trend to view chronic absenteeism as a warning sign of declining student well-being. Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies have demonstrated that absenteeism often precedes clinical referrals, academic disengagement, and an increased need for mental health services (Klassen et al., 2021; Johnsen et al., 2024). From this perspective, attendance data are highly valuable resources, but they are not effectively used to detect early signs of student distress.

Policy-oriented research also shows that well-being-based, non-punitive attendance models are more effective than disciplinary policies in reducing the long-term negative effects of disengagement (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Margaretha et al., 2023). At the same time, there is little empirical research on how these models are applied in international schools, especially in high-pressure environments like China. This gap highlights the need for conceptual frameworks that clearly link absenteeism to systemic processes of well-being, rather than treating it as merely a matter of isolated behavioral compliance.

The literature reviewed in this section shows that chronic absenteeism is entrenched in psychological, cultural, and institutional environments. These findings justify reframing absenteeism as a predictor of student well-being failure, especially in schools with high academic stress and in the international system. The following section builds on this foundation by analyzing student well-being in the context of globalized education systems, with a particular focus on engagement, belonging, and psychological safety as potential protective factors against withdrawal and absenteeism.

3. Well-being of students in Globalized education systems

3.1. Conceptualization of the Student Well-Being in the Global Education Settings

The issue of student well-being has become a focus of educational research, especially since education systems worldwide have begun to prioritize academic competitiveness, international benchmarking, and performance-based accountability. Modern science has developed the notion of well-being as a multidimensional construct that includes not only psychological and emotional dimensions but also social and academic aspects, rather than a limited lack of mental illness (Murray et al., 2024; Govorova et al., 2020). In globalized education systems, the interaction between institutional systems, cultural norms, and individual coping resources determines students' well-being.

International schools, particularly those in highly pressured environments such as China, tend to focus on academic achievement, strength, and international readiness. Although such priorities can lead to improved academic achievement, they can also create conditions in which emotional pressure is normalized and distress is underreported (Dobosz & Hetmanczyk, 2023; Ng, 2020). According to research, issues of well-being become an institutional concern only when academic achievement is no longer the prevailing measure of student functioning. This situation arises only when the problem is evident through behavioral changes, such as withdrawal or absenteeism (Kearney et al., 2023).

In this context, student well-being must be viewed as an individual phenomenon and a systemic effect. Educational systems that prioritize performance over psychological safety can indirectly lead to cumulative stress, undermining students' ability to remain engaged over time (Weist et al., 2023).

3.2 Culture of Performance, Academic Strain, and Emotional Strain

The heightened academic pressure from international competition, standardized tests, and high-stakes college admissions is a characteristic of globalized educational systems. There is substantial empirical evidence that long-term high academic pressure is associated with high levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion among students (Li et al., 2024; Kong et al., 2024; Ning et al., 2024). These processes have also been introduced in China through cultural discourses that equate academic success with personal value, family pride, and future stability (Yan, 2023).

Research in secondary and postsecondary settings has shown high levels of academic burnout characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced academic efficacy (Wu et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2023). The mechanism linking academic demands to disengagement behaviors, such as decreased attendance and psychological withdrawal, has been demonstrated through the lens of burnout (Kong et al., 2025). Notably, students experiencing burnout can still meet required performance levels in others' eyes, often suppressing their distress until it manifests in their behavior.

In the context of international schools, transnational comparisons, parental demands for global movement, and institutional reputational pressures tend to strengthen performance culture. These elements may enhance students' internalized expectations, increasing their risk of stress-related disengagement, even among low-performing students (McKeering et al., 2021; Cao & Meng, 2022).

Table 2. Key Dimensions of Student Well-Being in High-Pressure Global Education Systems

Dimension	Description	Relevance to Absenteeism
Psychological Well-Being	Emotional stability, stress regulation, and lack of burnout	Chronic stress may lead to withdrawal
Academic Engagement	Motivation, persistence, sense of purpose	Reduced engagement predicts absenteeism
Social Belonging	Peer connection and relational security	Weak belonging increases disengagement
Cultural Fit	Alignment between student identity and school norms	Misalignment contributes to stress
Institutional Support	Access to supportive policies and practices	Prevents escalation to chronic absence

Source: Synthesized from Govorova et al. (2020), McKeering et al. (2021), and Murray et al. (2024)

This multidimensional framing highlights that a single factor rarely causes absenteeism; rather, it results from the accumulation of pressures across various aspects of students' well-being.

3.3 Psychological Safety, Engagement, and Belonging

It is well known that psychological safety and a sense of belonging are the cornerstones of student well-being and long-term engagement in the learning process. Psychological safety can be understood as students' perception that their emotional needs will be addressed without fear of disrespect or punishment, and belonging can be described as a sense of significant social connection within the school population (Hill & Seah, 2022; Murray et al., 2024).

Protective factors are especially difficult to foster among students in international schools because of their high mobility, cultural diversity, and language diversity. The studies also point out that when academic ability remains high, students with low perceptions of belonging or emotional support are more likely to disengage behaviorally (Klassen et al., 2021). In the long run, this lack of involvement can manifest as a random absence that becomes habitual.

Cross-cultural research also indicates that in collectivist settings, students might repress distress to avoid disruption, fulfill perceived norms, and postpone seeking help (Yan, 2023; Hill Seah, 2022). Consequently, attendance data can be one of the first signs of deteriorating health in such settings.

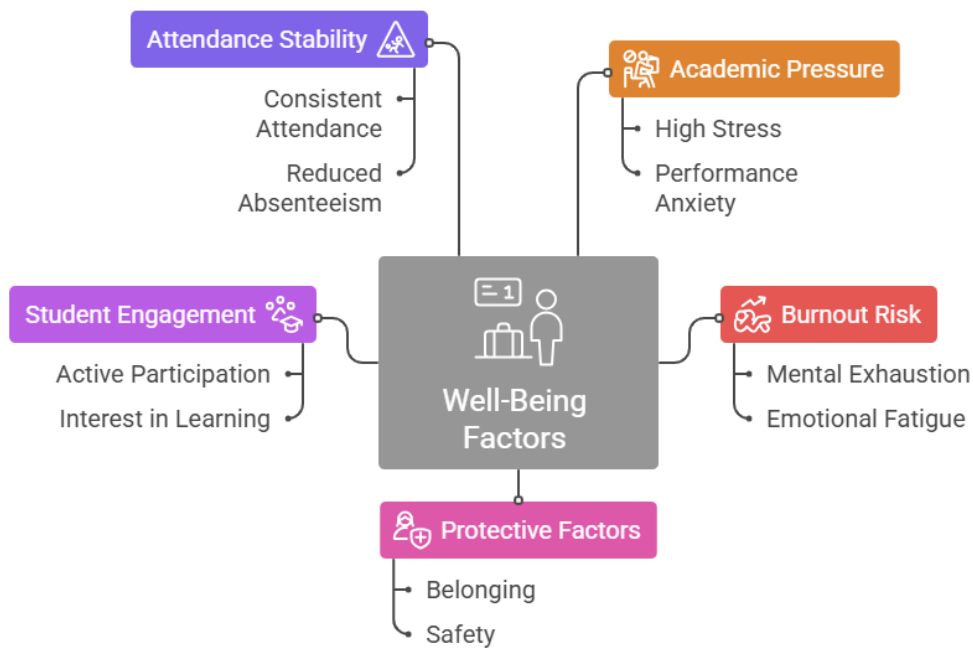


Figure 2. Interaction Between Academic Pressure, Protective Factors, and Attendance Outcomes
 Source: Conceptual synthesis based on Wu et al. (2024), McKeering et al. (2021), and Kearney et al. (2023)

This figure shows how the negative impact of academic pressure can be mitigated and how engagement and attendance can be balanced when the appropriate level of support is provided.

3.4 Well-Being Challenges in International Schools in China

Chinese international schools are situated in a unique contact zone between international educational standards and national cultural requirements. Although these institutions encourage holistic development, academic performance is often the primary metric for evaluation in practice (Jiang & Saito, 2022; Qu et

al., 2024). Therefore, well-being programs can be understood as complementary rather than integrative aspects of school practice.

Studies on the mental health of Chinese students indicate that high rates of psychological stress are consistently detected across age groups, and academic pressure is among the defining factors (Li et al., 2024; Dobosz & Hetmanczyk, 2023). The pressure is especially intense for international school students, who must navigate the negotiation of transnational identity, linguistic pressures, and expectations of global competitiveness (He et al., 2023; Cao & Meng, 2022).

When institutional responses to attendance compliance mechanisms fail to reduce the underlying stressors, students can continue to lose trust and psychological safety. Absenteeism can also become another form of withdrawal, happening without verbal communication over time, which shows that current support systems are not able to address students' well-being (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Weist et al., 2023).

3.5 Correlating Student Well-Being with Patterns of Attendance

Increasingly, the literature supports the idea that attendance trends are linked to students' well-being. Research indicates that absenteeism often acts as an early sign of mental health issues and leads to more service use (Klassen et al., 2021; Johnsen et al., 2024). In the high-pressure world of global education, this connection is especially important, as students may lack culturally acceptable ways to show distress.

A systems perspective on chronic absenteeism can be understood as a warning signal that something has gone wrong with the psychological, social, or institutional buffers that should effectively cushion the impact of academic pressure. This meaning aligns with the demands for preventive, well-being-centered solutions to attendance that incorporate mental health awareness into routine school operations (Margaretha et al., 2023; Weist et al., 2023).

Ultimately, this section and data show that the combination of academic pressure on students, cultural expectations, and institutional support systems affects student well-being within globalized education systems. In an international school in China, these factors create an environment where absenteeism can serve as an unspoken sign of increasing distress rather than deliberate disillusionment. The following section discusses the transnational student experience and international schools, focusing on issues of identity complexity and cultural transitions, and how these impact attendance and well-being.

4. The Transnational Student Experience and International Schools

4.1 International Schools as Education Spaces of Transnationality

International schools create transnational educational spaces shaped by globalization, mobility, and the convergence of diverse cultural and educational traditions. These schools aim to prepare students to become global citizens and gain access to international higher education. However, within the local sociocultural context in which these schools operate, expectations, norms, and daily practices are also shaped. In China, international schools are situated within broader social environments that highly value academic achievement and future success, which impose stratified expectations on students attending these schools (Jiang & Saito, 2022; Yan, 2023).

Research on globalized education systems indicates that international schools often display hybrid institutional identities, blending international curricular frameworks, local cultural practices, and parental expectations (Ng, 2020). While this hybridity can lead to more enriching learning experiences, it can also create tensions that hinder students' sense of coherence and belonging. Academic success is often viewed as the primary pathway to legitimacy and social identity, a role students are expected to navigate and

uphold, thereby increasing pressure to perform and limiting opportunities for vulnerability (Dobosz & Hetmanczyk, 2023).

In this case, attendance is a critical point at which both institutional requirements and student well-being intersect. Persistent absences can suggest not a lack of interest in learning, but that a student faces challenges staying engaged in learning environments that are psychologically stressful or misaligned with their developing identities (Kearney et al., 2023).

4.2 Identity Complexity between Transnational and Students

International school students often face complex processes of identity formation due to mobility, cultural hybridity, and exposure to diverse educational value systems. The negotiation of intricate transnational identities that do not align with either the home or the host cultural settings is quite common among expatriate students, whereas locally enrolled students may find themselves torn between domestic cultural expectations and international education frameworks (Ma et al., 2020; Cao & Meng, 2022).

Empirical studies indicate that identity complexity can also heighten emotional vulnerability, particularly during adolescence, when students navigate both academic pressures and their developing self-concept (He et al., 2023). In high-stress educational environments, identity-related strain may go unspoken because cultural norms discourage emotional expression or emphasize survival. Consequently, behavioral signs such as absenteeism can be indirect indicators of internal conflict or emotional overwhelm.

Research studies conducted in the Chinese educational setting also show that students facing identity-related stress may internalize pressure to meet both global and local demands, which puts them at risk of burnout and withdrawal (Yan, 2023; Kong et al., 2024). These factors emphasize the importance of understanding absenteeism from an identity-negotiation perspective rather than as a lack of motivation.

Table 3. Identity-Related Stressors in International School Contexts

Student Group	Core Identity Challenges	Potential Well-Being Implications
Expatriate Students	Cultural displacement and mobility	Emotional insecurity and withdrawal
Locally Enrolled Students	Dual cultural expectations	Heightened academic and identity stress
Transnational Learners	Hybrid educational values	Burnout and disengagement risk
Mobile Students	Recurrent school transitions	Disrupted belonging and attachment

Source: Synthesized from Ma et al. (2019), Cao and Meng (2022), and He et al. (2023)

This synthesis shows how identity-related stressors can accumulate across student groups, leading to disengagement that manifests in attendance patterns.

4.3 Transitions, Acculturation, and Adjustment to the Culture

Cultural transition is a major stressor for international school students, especially when they have just moved or are struggling to cope with multilingual learning conditions. Studies on acculturation have repeatedly shown that language proficiency, social norms, and communication patterns can adversely affect students' emotional well-being and academic engagement (Ma et al., 2020; Klassen et al., 2021). These issues may be exacerbated in high-pressure environments, where practicing cultural adjustment may not receive institutional support as a legitimate concern for well-being.

The Chinese tradition of collectivism, which emphasizes persistence and diligence, can only contribute to students' unwillingness to show signs of difficulty or need assistance (Yan, 2023; Hill & Seah, 2022). This

means that acculturation stress can be concealed, leading to its expression through behavioral means. Absenteeism can therefore become a negotiated coping process that enables students to take a temporary break from the demands of stress without necessarily confronting institutional or family demands.

Intercultural sensitivity studies show that it helps prevent emotional disruption among international students (He et al., 2023). However, the effectiveness of these skills depends on intentional institutional support, which can vary across school settings worldwide. When cultural transition challenges are not well handled, students may experience ongoing stress that affects their regular school attendance.

4.4 Family Expectations and Transnational Educational Expectations

Family expectations are instrumental in shaping students' experiences in international schools. For many families, international education enrollment is a strategic investment in global mobility and opportunity, often associated with high academic standards (Jiang & Saito, 2022; Ng, 2020). Although these aspirations can inspire students, they can also increase pressure and limit students' well-being.

Research on Chinese parenting styles has shown strong links among academic pressure, emotional control, and student burnout (Wang et al., 2024). In international schools, these influences can be magnified by the visibility of global competition and the perceived importance of educational success. Students may internalize family expectations so deeply that admitting distress feels like a failure, leading them to express disengagement indirectly, such as by avoiding being absent.

Notably, these trends cannot be viewed as manifestations of dysfunctional families, but as manifestations of systemic forces inscribed in the global education markets. It is critical to recognize the broader context to prevent deficit-based storylines and to create helpful, culturally responsive interventions.

4.5 Transnational Experience Implications on Attendance and Well-Being

As the literature reviewed in this section highlights, the experiences of transnational students involve overlapping academic, cultural, and identity-related stress. These pressures in international schools in China occur in high-stakes environments that can even desensitize students to the normalization of stress and limit early well-being support mechanisms. As a result, attendance patterns can be seen as a key factor in understanding the cumulative impact of transnational strain.

In this sense, absenteeism is not, as it is often considered, a form of disengagement but rather an adjustment to complex psychosocial demands. This interpretation is consistent with recent research that calls for incorporating cultural and identity factors into frameworks for attendance monitoring and student support (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Weist et al., 2023). Without proper integration, schools might misunderstand absenteeism and overlook its significance as an early sign of potential well-being issues.

This section demonstrates that the experiences of transnational students in international schools are shaped by the complexities of identity, cultural adaptation, and family demands, which interact with high academic pressure. These factors create situations in which absenteeism may serve as a hidden sign of distress rather than a form of nonconformity. Section 5 analyzes China as a high-pressure educational setting, examining international schooling through the lens of broader sociocultural and systemic influences on student well-being and attendance.

5. Stressful Educational Environment

5.1 Sociocultural Bases of Chinese Academic Pressure

The educational environment in China is defined by a strong sociocultural focus on academic success, discipline, and future success. Education, rooted in Confucian traditions, has historically been defined as a key means of social mobility and moral development, leading to entrenched expectations of effort,

perseverance, and performance (Yan, 2023; Hill & Seah, 2022). These ideals still define modern schooling, even in international education settings, where global curricular worlds overlap with locally prevalent achievement-oriented ideals.

In such a setting, academic pressure is both institutionalized and socially reinforced by family pressures, peer-to-peer comparisons, and broader societal rhetoric that links educational achievement to a sense of individual value (Wang et al., 2024). Although holistic education and student well-being rhetoric are promoted in international schools, these may still exert implicit pressure on students to meet high-performance norms aligned with local cultural demands (Jiang & Saito, 2022). Such convergence creates a situation in which stress is normalized and emotional difficulties are commonly managed as a failure of resilience rather than as a valid issue.

Studies have also suggested that this normalization of pressure may conceal early signs of distress; therefore, behavioral symptoms, such as unpleasant attendance behavior, are more prevalent than emotional conflicts (Kearney et al., 2023). Therefore, understanding these sociocultural underpinnings is important for contextualizing student absenteeism in international schools in China.

5.2 Policy, Competition, and Intensification of Stresses in Education

In addition to cultural values, systemic and policy issues significantly contribute to educational pressure in China. The larger education system is marked by fierce competition in academic achievement, with a strong focus on standardized performance and measurable results (Ng, 2020). Although international schools do not follow the national exam system, they still face competitive pressures due to expectations for university placements and parents' desire for global mobility.

International curricula are often seen as alternative paths to elite higher education and can add pressure rather than ease it (Dobosz & Hetmanczyk, 2023). Students may have a dual role of maintaining international academic standards while also meeting expectations shaped by local standards of excellence and endurance. This mixed-pressure environment can increase mental strain and emotional stress, especially for students who feel they cannot balance the two opposing pedagogical approaches.

The table below summarizes the structural and cultural factors that are likely to lead to academic pressure in international schools in China.

Table 4. Structural and Sociocultural Drivers of Educational Pressure in China

Pressure Dimension	Description	Implications for Students
Cultural Values	Emphasis on perseverance and achievement	Normalization of stress
Family Expectations	Education as a social mobility strategy	Heightened performance anxiety
Competitive Environment	Global university placement focus	Constant comparison and pressure
Policy Context	Outcome-oriented evaluation norms	Reduced tolerance for struggle

Source: Synthesized from Ng (2020), Jiang and Saito (2022), and Wang et al. (2024)

This summary shows that different levels of pressure overlap, making students' daily learning more complicated and limiting their opportunities for psychological recovery.

5.3 Academic Pressure and Mental Health of the Student

There is an increasing amount of literature that correlates academic pressure in the Chinese educational

setting with negative mental health problems and states such as anxiety, burnout, and emotional fatigue (Kong et al., 2024; Klassen et al., 2021). In international schools, such outcomes may be less observable, as it can be assumed that alternative curricula, by their nature, decrease stress. Nevertheless, empirical data suggest that pressure may persist, albeit in less obvious forms (He et al., 2023).

Students may internalize these expectations, refraining from expressing them outwardly, especially in settings where they are culturally conditioned to act without complaint (Yan, 2023). Consequently, psychological distress can be indirectly exhibited by disengagement behaviors, as opposed to direct help-seeking. In this regard, absenteeism can be a form of coping that provides students with a temporary reprieve from overwhelming forces without necessarily confronting institutional or family demands.

Notably, the correlation between academic stress and well-being is discontinuous but cumulative. The absence of support and exposure to high expectations over a significant period will erode students' agency and sense of belonging, making them more vulnerable to long-term withdrawal (Weist et al., 2023). This is a reminder to view attendance patterns as a possible indicator of well-being, not only as a measure of compliance.

5.4 International School Students In the High-Pressure Environment

Students in international schools in China occupy a unique position in the general education ecosystem. Although these schools generally focus on global citizenship, inquiry-based learning, and student-centered pedagogy, they are still imbued with the idea of a society that prioritizes academic rigor and tangible outcomes (Cao & Meng, 2022). This comparison may cause confusion about expectations, especially for transnational students who must operate across various cultural contexts.

Locally enrolled students may also feel increased pressure to demonstrate their involvement in international education through excellent performance. In contrast, expatriate students might struggle to balance the holistic ethos of education with the competitive environment around them (Ma et al., 2020). All these conflicting pressures can exist in the same institutional setting, with some students experiencing differences in well-being compared to others.

The table below shows that academic pressure varies across student groups in Chinese international schools, yet attendance remains the same.

Table 5. Differential Experiences of Academic Pressure Among International School Students

Student Profile	Primary Pressure Source	Attendance-Related Risk
Locally Enrolled Students	Family and societal expectations	Stress-related absenteeism
Expatriate Students	Cultural and adjustment demands	Emotional withdrawal
Transnational Students	Hybrid academic norms	Burnout and disengagement
High-Achieving Students	Performance maintenance	Perfectionism-related absence

Source: Adapted from Ma et al. (2019), Cao and Meng (2022), and Kong et al. (2024)

This distinction demonstrates that although pressure is everywhere, its sources and effects vary, and it is crucial to develop detailed, context-specific explanations of attendance behavior in the future.

5.5 Attendances and Student Support Implications

The literature reviewed in this section describes China as a high-stress educational environment where academic stress is culturally normalized, structurally reinforced, and psychologically rooted. For students in international schools, this environment shapes their experiences of distress, affecting how they express

and manage it. Absenteeism is not seen as a behavioral problem, but as a potential sign of unmet emotional and psychological needs.

Ignoring attendance in this high-pressure system could be risky, as it might be seen as disinterest or low motivation, even though attendance can be an early sign of reduced well-being (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Kearney et al., 2023). Therefore, understanding the systemic causes of pressure is crucial for developing supportive attendance policies that suit the context of international schools in China.

Since the broader context of high-pressure education in China has already been established, the next section presents the analysis of student well-being models and absenteeism. This adjustment enables a more focused exploration of the relationship among psychological well-being, institutional responses, and attendance patterns in international schools.

6. Chronic Absenteeism as an Early Warning Sign and Implications for School Practice and Policy

6.1 Conceptualizing Chronic Absenteeism as a Signal of Well-Being

Chronic absenteeism is a complex, multifactorial issue that extends beyond the conventional conception of truancy or disciplinary nonconformity. In the context of international schools in China, chronic absenteeism can be considered a hidden yet significant early warning signal of structural issues in students' lives (Kearney et al., 2023; Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019). Students who experience long-term emotional stress, academic pressure, or are unable to cope with cultural demands can develop withdrawal behaviors, which can be observed in attendance patterns prior to the manifestation of psychological or academic failure (Dobosz & Hetmanczyk, 2023; He et al., 2023).

Empirical research has revealed significant correlations between long-term absenteeism and measures of mental health susceptibility, such as anxiety, depression, burnout, and a lack of engagement (Li et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2024; Kong et al., 2024). Through a psychological, cultural, and systemic lens on absenteeism, schools can identify students at risk before resorting to solely reactive disciplinary measures (Kearney & Gonzalez, 2022). This viewpoint sees absenteeism as an indicator, not a symptom, and recommends interventions focused on encouragement and prevention rather than punishment.

6.2 Patterns and Predictors of Risk of Absenteeism

International school students in China are more likely to experience chronic absenteeism due to academic overload, family and societal pressure, the burden of adapting to a new culture, and the complexity of transnational identity formation (Ma et al., 2020; Cao & Meng, 2022). The constant academic pressure and performance anxiety in competitive schools can gradually erode students' resilience and their sense of belonging to the school.

Declining participation is a common precursor to chronic absenteeism. Absenteeism often results from reduced student involvement in the classroom, emotional detachment from the learning process, and loss of motivation. Research indicates that absenteeism is often accompanied by the early signs of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward academic duties, and a sense of ineffectiveness (Kong et al., 2025; Li & Wang, 2024). Taken through the prism of well-being, absenteeism is not just a particular behavioral phenomenon, but a symptom of more significant mental stress and detachment.

Students at international schools in China must balance their academic and cultural expectations. The combination of a performance-oriented school culture and pressures from transnational identities may lead to disengagement and increase the chances that stressed students will physically withdraw from the school environment. Table 6 summarizes the main risk factors for absenteeism identified in international school settings, emphasizing the connections between these risk factors and well-being outcomes.

Table 6. Key Risk Factors for Chronic Absenteeism in International Schools in China

Risk Factor	Description	Associated Outcome	Well-Being
Academic Overload	High expectations across international and local curricula	Burnout, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion	
Identity Complexity	Navigating dual or hybrid cultural identities	Withdrawal, low engagement	
Cross-Cultural Adjustment	Language barriers and social norm differences	Stress-related absenteeism	
Family Expectations	Pressure to achieve globally competitive outcomes	Performance anxiety, perfectionism	
Peer Comparison	Competitive school culture and social comparison	Decreased self-efficacy, emotional distress	

Source: Synthesized from Ma et al. (2019), He et al. (2023), and Kearney et al. (2023)

The table shows that the risk of absenteeism is complex and interconnected, which can exacerbate well-being problems.

6.3 Preliminary Surveillance with Attendance Data

Early detection of chronic absenteeism can be enhanced by implementing data-gathering monitoring systems in schools. Longitudinal data on partial- or full-day absences will reveal how students' stress and engagement levels change over time (Kearney et al., 2023; Dalforno et al., 2022). For instance, a sudden increase in intermittent absences may indicate emerging emotional stress, and a consistent decline in attendance could signal burnout or deteriorating mental health (Ulas & Secer, 2024).

Figure 3. Hypothetical Trend of Student Absenteeism as an Early Indicator of Well-Being Risk

This figure illustrates a hypothetical scenario where a student's weekly attendance gradually declines over 20 weeks. Small drops in attendance early on can signal potential well-being issues. This visualization emphasizes the need for ongoing monitoring rather than reactive responses.

6.4 School Practical Implications

Interpreting absenteeism as an indicator of well-being has direct implications for educational practice. A preventive, data-informed strategy should be implemented in schools that combines attendance tracking with a psychosocial support system. Such interventions can include organized check-ins, mental health counseling, culturally informed advisor programs, and stress-reduction programs tailored to transnational students (Weist et al., 2023; McKeering et al., 2021).

In addition, cooperation among teachers, parents, and mental health workers is essential. Open communication helps schools put absenteeism into perspective within students' wider social, cultural, and educational contexts and enables support to be provided based on the underlying causes of the behavior rather than on compliance (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Kearney et al., 2023).

6.5 Well-Being-Centered Attendance Policy: Several Implications

On the policy front, chronic absenteeism should be integrated into well-being-focused attendance models. Conventional punitive approaches can only increase stress and deepen disengagement, especially in high-pressure settings (Kearney et al., 2021). Policymakers are encouraged to concentrate on the following:

1. Procedures of early detection based on longitudinal attendance and interaction measures
2. The inclusion of mental health services in school policy

3. Non-punitive measures, which deal with academic, social, and emotional factors that contribute to absenteeism

The table below shows the conceptual correspondence between the indicators of absenteeism and the recommended interventions.

Table 7. Absenteeism Indicators and Corresponding Well-Being Interventions

Absenteeism Indicator	Potential Underlying Cause	Recommended School Intervention
Frequent partial-day absence	Emerging stress or anxiety	Advisory meetings, counseling
Sudden full-day absences	Acute adjustment or identity stress	Parental consultation, social support programs
Long-term attendance decline	Academic overload or burnout	Individualized academic planning, mental health support
Sporadic unexplained absence	Cultural or peer-related stress	Mentoring, peer support networks

Source: Adapted from Kearney et al. (2023), Gentle-Genitty et al. (2019), Weist et al. (2023)

The table illustrates how data on absenteeism can be used to develop a practical, organized intervention that highlights the importance of aligning school practices with student well-being goals.

6.6 Absenteeism and Intervention Impact Visualization



Figure 4. Absenteeism, Well-Being Risk, and School Intervention: A Conceptual Model

This figure depicts the pathway of academic, cultural, and identity-related stressors leading to chronic absenteeism. It demonstrates that stress and early intervention mediate the connection between stress and well-being outcomes. The figure highlights the importance of proactive support systems and school policies.

6.7 Implementation and Future Implications

International schools and policymakers can shift punitive models to preventive, well-being-focused ones by conceptualizing absenteeism as an early warning system. Contextually interpreted attendance data can provide actionable information about students' health conditions, engagement, and social integration. Academic, psychosocial, and cultural aspects should be incorporated into monitoring, intervention, and policy design to promote student well-being over the long term and reduce the risks associated with high-pressure education systems in China (He et al., 2023; Kearney et al., 2023; McKeering et al., 2021).

This comprehensive approach is necessary to ensure that the problem of absenteeism is not viewed in isolation but as a complex ecosystem that interrelates academic requirements, cultural pressures, identity development, and emotional well-being. The following section discusses the ethical issues and cultural sensitivity that are crucial for achieving effective implementation of these practices.

8. Ethical and Cultural Sensitivities

8.1 Data Privacy and Confidentiality of Attendance Monitoring

Although proactive attendance-monitoring systems in international schools are crucial for early detection of harm to students' well-being, there are ethical concerns about their use. First, it includes the security of sensitive student information. By gathering comprehensive attendance trends, along with psychological, academic, and cultural indicators, one can obtain datasets that reveal intimate details of students' emotional and social lives. The misuse of such information may result in privacy invasion, stigmatization, and other collateral effects on students' future academic paths (Weist et al., 2023; Kearney et al., 2023).

In turn, ethical frameworks should prioritize confidentiality, informed consent, and data security. International schools should ensure that data on attendance and well-being are accessible only to authorized staff and interpreted holistically and in context, given that these behaviors may be misclassified or overinterpreted. In addition, the data collection process must be transparent, and students and their families must be informed about how the information will be used to help the student, not to punish them (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Kearney & Gonzalvez, 2022).

8.2 Prevention of Institutional and Cultural Bias

The possibility of institutional and cultural biases in interpreting absenteeism is another critical factor to consider. This is because high-pressure learning environments, including those in China, are heavily influenced by social needs, family dynamics, and cultural practices related to success and persistence (Yan, 2023; Hill & Seah, 2022). Unless it is considered in relation to these cultural dimensions, schools might unintentionally interpret stress-related absenteeism as disengagement or defiance and administer punishment that will only increase student distress (Dobosz & Hetmanczyk, 2023).

The population of international schools can be heterogeneous, including expatriate students, local students, and transnational learners who must navigate complex cultural and academic demands. A culturally responsive approach, sensitivity to identity formation processes, and sensitivity to issues of cross-cultural adaptation are ethical requirements for practice (Ma et al., 2020; Cao & Meng, 2022). Teachers must understand that well-being cannot be measured by attendance; instead, absenteeism needs to be put in the context of other psychosocial and cultural factors.

8.3 Integrated Ethical Considerations Table

The table below outlines the ethical and cultural factors to consider when monitoring attendance and providing well-being support at an international school. It shows how different areas are interconnected and provides practical advice for school policies and practices.

Table 8. Ethical and Cultural Considerations in Attendance and Well-Being Interventions

Ethical/Cultural Domain	Consideration	Recommended Practice
Data Privacy	Protect sensitive student information	Secure storage, restricted access, informed consent
Confidentiality	Avoid exposing students' personal well-being status	Only share with authorized staff, anonymized reporting
Cultural Bias	Misinterpretation of culturally influenced behaviors	Incorporate culturally responsive training and assessment
Institutional Bias	Punitive responses to absenteeism	Use preventive, supportive interventions rather than sanctions
Transnational Identity	Complexity in identity formation and adaptation	Provide differentiated support sensitive to local and global cultural norms

Source: Adapted from Weist et al. (2023), Kearney et al. (2023), Gentle-Genitty et al. (2019), and Ma et al. (2019)

The table highlights the importance of a multilayered ethical framework. These aspects should be addressed to prevent injuries, promote fairness, and create supportive learning environments that consider the intersection of culture, identity, and student well-being.

8.4 Implications to Policy and to School Practice

Ethical sensitivity in absenteeism monitoring is a direct way in which school policies are designed and implemented. Well-being-focused frameworks were embedded in schools, combining data-based identification with culturally sensitive interventions. They should strictly prohibit punitive interventions to address student absences and instead encourage positive and supportive interactions, counseling, and comprehensive student monitoring (Kearney et al., 2021; Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019).

In addition, staff professional development is needed to provide opportunities for staff to address ethical dilemmas, analyze attendance data responsibly, and deliver interventions that do not infringe on students' cultural and emotional backgrounds (Weist et al., 2023). Open communication with families about the purpose of monitoring systems will build trust, align expectations, and foster commitment to a common goal for student welfare.

8.5 Synthesis and Forward Outlook

In conclusion, the optimal and responsible use of absenteeism as a measure of student health is grounded in ethical and cultural considerations. By protecting privacy, preventing bias, and acknowledging diversity among international school groups, teachers and policymakers can create systems that accommodate students rather than punish them. The combination of these principles would help ensure that attendance monitoring aligns with the broader goals of holistic education, student resilience, and equal access to well-being support in high-pressure global education systems in China (Kearney et al., 2023; Yan, 2023; Dobosz & Hetmanczyk, 2023).

9. Conclusion and Direction For Future Research

9.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study examined chronic absenteeism as a new indicator of student well-being challenges in international education systems in China, a highly competitive global education environment. Some important lessons were learned during the analysis. First, the conceptualization of chronic absenteeism was not based on a disciplinary problem but a multifactorial indicator of the academic, emotional, and cultural pressures experienced by students (Kearney et al., 2023; Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019). The literature suggests that absenteeism is often predictive of more serious signs of psychological distress, such as burnout, withdrawal, anxiety, and depression; therefore, it can be used to predict the risk of student well-being in the early stages (Wu et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024; Kong et al., 2025).

Second, the study highlighted the peculiarities of the international school setting in China, where students must navigate between local educational cultures and transnational demands. The importance of identity complexity, cross-cultural shifts, and social pressures in the context of absenteeism is clear, and the need to situate the problem of attendance within the broader psychosocial and cultural factors is evident (Ma et al., 2020; Cao & Meng, 2022; Yan, 2023).

Third, the research revealed the importance of frameworks focused on well-being, including cumulative proactive monitoring, targeted interventions, and supportive policies. Empirical data indicate that prevention based on data-driven and information-grounded approaches, rather than punitive interventions, leads to higher levels of student engagement and resilience, lower rates of absenteeism, and long-term academic and psychosocial success (Kearney & Gonzalez, 2022; Weist et al., 2023; McKeering et al., 2021). In addition, ethical and cultural factors, such as protecting privacy and mitigating potential biases, are of great importance in ensuring the interventions are fair, respectful, and efficient (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Dobosz & Hetmanczyk, 2023).

9.2 Significance and Contributions of this Research

This study has several significant implications for the broader field of international education and student welfare. Translating chronic absenteeism into a broader early-warning framework for structural issues in well-being shifts the paradigm from treating it as a problem to penalize to one of preventing and addressing it. This perspective aligns with global trends toward mental health, engagement, and student-centered education policies (Kearney et al., 2023; Margaretha et al., 2023; He et al., 2023).

Moreover, the study notes the overlap among cultural, academic, and systemic factors affecting absenteeism, offering a subtle insight that can be applied in international schools serving diverse students. The study offers a conceptual, empirical, and policy-oriented perspective by bringing together conceptual, empirical, and policy-oriented understandings to provide a framework that informs school practice, educational policy, and future research agendas in high-pressure educational settings, specifically in the realm of East Asian schooling and transnational schooling settings (Yan, 2023; Cao & Meng, 2022; McKeering et al., 2021).

9.3 Future Research Directions

Although this study is comprehensive, several gaps suggest directions for future research. First, longitudinal research on absenteeism and psychosocial predictors would be strengthened by empirical data on absenteeism and detailed predictors of well-being outcomes (Kearney et al., 2023; Dalforno et al., 2022). Second, more comparative research on different types of international schools and cultural backgrounds would help clarify how cultural and systemic factors influence patterns of absenteeism and risk of well-being (Ma et al., 2020; Cao & Meng, 2022).

Third, studies on the efficacy of specific intervention measures, such as culturally responsive advisory programs, stress-reduction programs, or digital attendance monitoring accompanied by counseling, would provide evidence-based recommendations to schools and policymakers (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Weist et al., 2023). Finally, the practical effectiveness of these models should be confirmed by studies of long-term well-being-based attendance systems, such as academic performance, resilience, and mental health outcomes, to guide the development of sustainable policies (Kearney et al., 2023; McKeering et al., 2021).

9.4 Concluding Remarks

Finally, chronic absenteeism in Chinese international schools is an overlooked yet serious indicator of negligence in prioritizing student welfare within high-pressure global education systems. This study identifies the need for preventive, culturally sensitive, and ethically appropriate approaches to support students in their entirety by reconceptualizing absenteeism through a well-being lens. Early identification systems, responsive interventions, and supportive policy frameworks not only reduce the dangers of high-pressure education but also promote a strong, healthy, and successful student population. Therefore, this study adds value to the body of knowledge concerning student well-being, international education, and systemic educational reform, both conceptually and practically, for schools functioning in complex transnational settings (Kearney et al., 2023; Gentle-Genitty et al., 2019; Weist et al., 2023).

References

1. Kearney, C. A., Dupont, R., Fensken, M., Benoist, D., and Graczyk, P. A. (2023). School attendance problems and absenteeism as early warning signals: Review and implications for health-based protocols and school-based practices. *Frontiers in Education*, 8, 1253595. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1253595>
2. Kearney, C. A., & González, C. (2022). Unlearning school attendance and its problems: Moving from historical categories to postmodern dimensions. *Frontiers in Education*, 7, 977672. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.977672>
3. Kearney, C. A., Benoit, L., González, C., & Ingul, J. M. (2021). School attendance and school absenteeism: A primer for the past, present, and theory of change for the future. *School Mental Health*, 14, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.1044608>
4. Gentle-Genitty C., Taylor J. G., & Renguette, C. (2019). A change in the frame: From absenteeism to attendance. *Frontiers in Education*, 4, 161. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00161>
5. Jiang, W., & Saito, E. (2022). Lightening the academic burden on Chinese children: A discourse analysis of recent education policies. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 88, 102583. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-022-09470-6>
6. Li, H., Ludin, A. F. M., Ahmad, M., Meng, X., & Lei, Z. (2024). The prevalence and its associated factors of psychological stress among middle school students in China: Pooled evidence from a systematic scoping review. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 12, 1358210. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.1358210>
7. Qu, D., Wen, X., Cheng, X., & Wang, Y. (2024). School mental health prevention and intervention strategies in China: A scoping review. *Lancet Regional Health–Western Pacific*, 46, 100937. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanwpc.2024.101243>
8. Zhang, W., Balloo, K., Hosein, A., & Medland, E. (2025). ‘I Feel Happy Every Day, but I Also Feel Empty’: A Qualitative Investigation of Chinese Vocational College Students’ Well-Being. *Social Indicators Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-025-03701-y>

9. Yan, S. (2023). Educational Dilemmas in East Asia: The Impact of Confucianism in Modern Society. *Lecture Notes in Education, Psychology and Public Media*, 18, 272-278. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/18/20231340>
10. Dobosz, D., & Hetmańczyk, H. (2023). Well-being of Chinese students: A review in the context of implications for the educational process. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1156327. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2212585X231163388>
11. Xie, M., Bie, X., Sun, Y., & Chen, Q. (2024). Development and validation of the School in China Refusal Evaluation Scale: A tool to assess school refusal in Chinese adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 21, 1254. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21081254>
12. Wang, Y. A., Ma'rof, A. I. M., & Sulong, R. M. (2024). Parenting styles, gender roles, and academic burnout among Chinese students: A cultural perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1389425. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2024.05.31.24307805>
13. Wu, H., Zeng, Y., & Fan, Z. (2024). Unveiling Chinese senior high school EFL students' burnout and engagement: Profiles and antecedents. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1324567. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104153>
14. Li, J., & Wang, R. (2024). Determining the role of innovative teaching practices, sustainable learning, and the adoption of e-learning tools in leveraging academic motivation for students' mental well-being. *Heliyon*, 10, e28456. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-01639-3>
15. He, J., Song, X., Wang, C., & Zhang, R. (2023). Intercultural sensitivity as a mediator in the relationship between implicit intercultural identification and emotional disturbance: An exploratory study of international high school students. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 14, 1098671. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2023.1098671>
16. McKeering, P., Hwang, Y.-S., & Ng, C. (2021). A study into wellbeing, student engagement, and resilience in early-adolescent international school students. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 2, 100045. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14752409211006650>
17. Cao, C., & Meng, Q. (2022). The dual processes of health impairment and motivation in international student adjustment in China: Insights from a demands-resources model. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 88, 101669. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03630-w>
18. Dalfovo, R. W., Wengert, H. I., Kim, L. P., et al. (2022). Anxiety and school absenteeism without permission among adolescents in 69 low- and middle-income countries. *Global Mental Health*, 9, e33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dialog.2022.100046>
19. Murray, C. A., Gabriel, F., and Kennedy, J. P. (2024). Factors that promote student well-being in schools: A scoping review of Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand literature. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11, Article 1542. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-04059-1>
20. Margaretha, M., Azzopardi, P. S., Fisher, J., & Sawyer, S. M. (2023). School-based mental health promotion: A global policy review. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 14, 1126767. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2023.1126767>
21. Weist, M. D., Hoover, S., Daly, B. P., & Short, K. H. (2023). Propelling the global advancement of school mental health. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 26, 851-864. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-023-00434-7>
22. Ng, P. T. (2020). The paradoxes of student well-being in Singapore. *ECNU Review of Education*, 3(3), 437-451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2096531120935127>

23. Hill, J. L., & Seah, W. T. (2022). Student values and well-being in mathematics education: Perspectives of Chinese primary students. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 9, 54. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11858-022-01418-7>
24. Govorova, E., Benítez, I., & Muñiz, J. (2020). How schools affect student well-being: A cross-cultural approach in 35 OECD countries. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 431. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00431>
25. Kovess-Masféty, V., Frounfelker, R. L., Keyes, K. M., et al. (2023). Education as a protective factor for mental health risks among youth living in highly dangerous regions in Afghanistan. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 17, 12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-022-00548-w>
26. Fredriksson, U., Rasmusson, M., Backlund, A., & Westerman, D. (2024). Which students skip schools? A comparative study of sociodemographic factors and student absenteeism using PISA data. *PLoS ONE*, 19, e0300537. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0300537>
27. Johnsen D. B., Lomholt J. J., Heyne, D., et al. (2024). The effectiveness of modular transdiagnostic cognitive behavioral therapy versus treatment as usual for youths displaying school attendance problems: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 65, 789-801. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-024-01196-8>
28. Ulaş, S., & Seçer, İ. (2024). A systematic review of school refusal. *Current Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-05742-x>
29. Klassen, J. A., Stewart, S. L., & Lapshina, N. (2021). School disengagement and mental health service intensity needs among clinically referred students utilizing the interRAI Child and Youth Mental Health assessment instrument. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 12, 690917. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.690917>
30. Ma, K., Pitner, R., Sakamoto, I., & Park, H. Y. (2020). “Challenges in acculturation among international students from Asian collectivist cultures.” *Higher Education Studies*, 10(3), 34–43. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v10n3p34>
31. Chen, Y. W., Pan, L., Lu, F., Sun, D., Liao, C., & Na, M. (2025). Psychological detachment in Chinese higher education: a multitheoretical model of academic stress, cultural pressure, and coping resources. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1647184>
32. Kong, Y., Somdee, T., & Yangyuen, S. (2025). Academic burnout and its association with psychological factors among medical students in Guangxi, China. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 14(1), 101. https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_1762_24
33. Liu, Z., Xie, Y., Sun, Z., Liu, D., Hang, Y., & Shi, L. (2023). Factors associated with academic burnout and its prevalence among university students: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Medical Education*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-023-04316-y>
34. Ning, X., Luo, X., & Guo, S. (2024). Researching into Chinese university students’ mental health in the post-pandemic era: Problems and causes. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1393603>