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School Attendance and Wellbeing: Research, Practice, and Collaboration

**Monday 15th
June, 2026**

**University of
Jyväskylä,
Ruusupuisto
and online**

School Attendance and Wellbeing: Research, Practice, and Collaboration

Across many countries, concerns about school absenteeism have intensified, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given its complex and multifaceted causes and its lasting impact on young people's development and life trajectories, advancing our understanding of absenteeism, including its risk and protective factors, is critical for building effective systems and interventions that support regular school attendance and student wellbeing.

This one-day symposium brings together international and local researchers and practitioners to provide new and meaningful insights into school attendance and absenteeism, with a focus on exploring strategies that support prevention and intervention. The program is organised around three key themes:



School attendance problems and school engagement



Emotionally distress-driven attendance problems (e.g., Emotionally-Based School Avoidance)



Hikikomori (prolonged social withdrawal), with school attendance problems as an early manifestation.

Symposium Goals

- Share cutting-edge research findings from both international and local experts.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange and strengthen networks among national and international researchers and local partner organisations.
- Explore and develop collaborative partnerships to better understand and address school attendance problems.

Details

The symposium will be held in a hybrid format on June 15 (Monday), 2026. Participation is free of charge.

Venue: University of Jyväskylä, Ruusu puisto building (D101 Juho).

Participants who are unable to attend in person are welcome to join online via Zoom: <https://anu.zoom.us/j/83111764964?pwd=mZyuK0pGSW0PYR1TyfsxNyP2iDnTGO.1> Meeting ID: 831 1176 4964
Password: 355924

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School Attendance and Wellbeing: Research, Practice, and Collaboration

This symposium is supported by the Hansen Scandinavian Friendship Grant, funded by the Australian National University. It is organised by Associate Professor Junwen Chen (Australian National University, Australia), in collaboration with Dr Tuomo Virtanen and Associate Professor Kati Vasalampi (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), Professor Klaus Ranta (University of Tampere) and Associate Professor Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg (Stockholm University, Sweden).

Programme

08:30 - 09:00 Room Open, Morning coffee

09:00 - 9:05 Welcome

SESSION 1

Chair: Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg

09:05 - 09:35 Invited Talk: Notes on Students' Engagement in School
Dr Tuomo Virtanen
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

09:35 - 9:55 Open paper: Mapping Multilevel Variation in School Absences in Finnish Comprehensive Schools.
Doctorial Researcher
Johanna Sergejeff
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

9:55 - 10:15 Open paper: The Role of School and Classroom Contexts in Absences Among Basic Education Students: Preliminary Findings from Two Studies.
Doctorial Researcher
Eeva-Liisa Markkanen
University of Turku, Finland

10:15 - 10:25 Q&A Discussion

SESSION 2

Chair: Tuomo Virtanen

10:25 - 10:55 Invited Talk: School Drop-out
A/Prof Kati Vasalampi
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

10:55 - 11:15 Open paper: Newly Arrived Migrant Students' Social Support and Lesson Engagement.
Doctorial Researcher
Ella Kopra
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

11:15 - 11:35 Open paper: Parent's Narratives of Change and Agency in Emotion-Related School Attendance Challenges.
Doctorial Researcher
Petra Vesuri
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

11:35 - 11:45 Q&A Discussion

11:45 - 12:30 Lunch Break

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SESSION 3

Chair: Junwen Chen

12:30 - 13:00	Invited Talk: Emotionally based school avoidance.	Prof Klaus Ranta University of Tampere, Finland
13:00 - 13:20	Open paper: Young people's perceptions of social anxiety and stigma in the school environment.	Doctorial Researcher Vili Antikainen University of Tampere, Finland
13:20 - 13:40	Open paper: School functioning and attendance among Finnish youth with social anxiety.	Doctorial Researcher Heidi Kusnetsov University of Tampere, Finland

13:40 - 13:50 Q&A Discussion

SESSION 4

Chair: Kati Vasalampi

13:50 - 14:20	Invited Talk: Hikikomori (prolonged social withdrawal) in Australia	A/Prof Junwen Chen Australian National University, Australia
14:20 - 14:40	Which Hikikomori? Deepening understanding of features, definitions, and related implications	Dr Simone Amendola University of Calabria, Italy
14:40 - 15:00	Open paper: CHATogether®: mentalization-based theater intervention improves anxiety and relational conflicts in adolescents and their caregivers.	Dr Eunice Yuen Yale School of Medicine and Child Study Center, the USA

15:00 - 15:10 Q&A Discussion

SESSION 5

Chair: Klaus Ranta

15:10 - 15:40	Invited Talk: International comparisons of school attendance problems.	A/Prof Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg Stockholm University, Sweden
15:40 - 16:00	Open paper: Organizing schools' work to improve attendance. The role of school leaders and policies.	Dr Malin Gren Landell Stockholm University, Sweden
16:00 - 16:20	Open paper: SEL4LL: Promoting adolescents' social and emotional skills through game-based learning.	Dr Frances Hofericher University of Greifswald, Germany
16:20 - 16:30	Q&A Discussion	
16:30 - 16:35	Closing: Summary and outlook	Junwen Chen Klaus Ranta Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg