

LEVELS OF TRUANCY AND SCHOOL LEARNING: IMPLICATION FOR SKILL VALUE REORIENTATION AND COUNSELLING

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of truancy on school learning. The sample consisted of One Thousand, Four Hundred and Ninety-Seven (1,497) senior secondary school students drawn from government-own public schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The ex-post factor research design was used for the study. Students' opinion Questionnaire (SOQ), tests in English Language and Mathematics were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using one way Analysis of variance and post-Hoc test using Schaffer's test was conducted to determine the direction of influence. The result indicated that the levels of truancy had significant influence on students' academic performance. The subjects' levels of truancy were implicated in low, moderate and high due to values which exert themselves upon school learning. Based on the findings, it was recommended that students should be enlightened on the value of school learning so as to be gainfully employed. Schools should also contact parents of truants and provide additional assignments and punishment as deterrents. The Legislators should enact compulsory attendance laws and should be mandatory for children of age six (6) to eighteen (18) years. It is also recommended that students should refrain from those behaviours that run contrary to school learning.

Learning could be viewed as a relatively permanent change in behaviour that is direct result of past experienced acquired through training activities or observation (Lawson, Goldstein and Musty (1975). Learning is a basic need of all persons. It generates in the citizenry skills *and* attitudes that are favourable to modernization, industrial growth and to go higher academically. Accordingly, formal school develops a social order which takes the form of rules and regulations that govern the official actions of its members. The social order creates conducive conditions which involves all activities which essentially aim at providing the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for employment in a profession.

However, observation has shown that one of the major problems facing school learning is that of truancy among students throughout the world. Sustained absences may lead to retention and later to chronic truancy which extends to the working environment. Search for causes of truancy and some practical solutions to its problems have persistently engaged in the attention of researchers globally. Prominent among the researchers are Deleiden and Chorpita (1991), Lee and Miltenberger (1996), who found that student view school attendance as punishment. While Stickney and Miltenberger (1998) identify more enjoyable activities as the main reasons for truancy. Though, there has been a substantial amount of research on truancy, still a prior justification for this study has been established on the fact that empirical work in this area of the study is lacking. Secondly, it evaluates the students' performance and re-orientates them for better performance. This paper focuses on the unexcused absences.

Conceptual Frame Work

The study fits into the social control theory of Travis Hirschi (1969). The theorist holds that norms prohibit anti-social behaviour such that lack of internalized norms and rules governing the school system would result to anti-social behaviour such as truancy. Psychologists regard the internationalization of norms as conscience. He further stated that if individuals are tied to the norms, especially in the school system, deviant acts such as truancy will be limited. The uncommitted adolescent is a candidate for truancy, thus, anti-social behaviour. He also assumed that anti-social behaviour is a direct effect of weak ties to the conventional normative order, but disciplined behaviour

is a direct effect of strong ties to the conventional normative order. He believed that most students will be tempted into delinquency but most refuse because they believe they have too much to lose.

This theory is relevant to this study because it is widely known that different students have different early socialization experiences, which result in the different levels of commitment and integration into the school system. The theory portrays that anti-social behaviour in the school is a direct effect of lack of internalization of school rules and norms, but good social behaviour is a direct effect of strong ties to the school norms.

Reckless (1961) is of the view that the child's inner containment, which is the positive sense of self and the outer containment that is supervision and discipline inhibit anti-social behaviours. This theory is relevant because as explained by Hirschi; strong social bond in the school situation inhibits anti-social behaviour.

Statement of the Problem

Loss of instructional time in the school affects both the student and the society. Students who are truants often suffer academically and socially. Infact, truancy is also felt outside the classroom. Those who drop out of school often move on the lines of crime. Some who employed also extend of the acts of truancy working environment which common experience, ratio and research evident have indicated that learning activities in the past by students are today seen to be very poorly practiced among students. Most students exhibit behaviours that run counter to school learning. Many students, who performed poorly at the senior secondary school certificate examination (SSCE), usually find it difficult to go higher academically. Some even drop out of school system and cannot be gainfully employed. Based on these facts and many others, the researchers have set out to investigate the levels of truancy on school learning and implication for work value rein-orientation and counseling.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the level of influence of truancy on school learning.

Research Question

The study seeks to find answer to this question. To what extend does the level of truancy influence students' academic performance?

Research Hypothesis

The level of truancy does not significantly influence students' academic performance.

Significance of the Study

Failure in school affects the society in terms of manpower needs. Therefore, the significance of this study lies very much in the educational field. The study will be of benefit to the students, education policy-makers, teachers, parents and researchers.

To the students, the study will help them to utilize their time in the most appropriate ways of learning that may help them improve their performance. Being aware of effective learning, it is hoped, they will be committed to their studies; thus, they will not be candidates for truancy. The law makers should be aware of the need to call compulsory regular school attendance law for children of age six to eighteen years. The study will make the education policy makers to design programmes on core subjects, both in arts and science which will enhance effective learning.

The findings of this study will grant teachers strong awareness of students' truancy and thus, provide a kind of learning that will take care of special education needs. Parents will, through the findings and recommendations of this study monitor and guide their children on the effective use of time for learning, even in the home environment.

Levels of Truancy and School Learning: Implication for Skill Value Reorientation and Counselling

The findings of this study may create awareness which will be of immense benefit, not only to the students, but also to the general society in the areas of students' truancy and their effects on school performance.

The study will contribute to the knowledge bank so as to enrich the knowledge base for future researchers. This will help them identify areas already covered so as to direct their studies on areas yet to be covered.

Literature Review

Empirical work in the area is rare. However, Williams (2007) carried out a survey study on truancy and academic achievement using a sample of 15,600 students in Wisconsin Public Schools. His findings revealed that 1.6% of the students that enrolled in the 1998-1999 academic year were truants. In the 1999-2000 academic year, 31.1% were truants. On the academic performance, it was discovered that most of the absentees missed their tests, thus truancy affects school learning. He further observed that the major antisocial behaviour facing public schools and that which is adversely affecting the success of school learning is chronic truancy.

Miller and Martin (1995) carried out a study on school truancy and school performance in the U.K on school students born in 1979. This study involved the UK and 22 other countries. It was a survey study using questionnaire. The population consisted of 1,740 individuals aged 15-16 years who had been born then.

The result indicated that 58.4% admitted being absent for two or more days. About 68% admitted to have missed classed, 5.7% admitted to have missed classes for two or more days, while 19.4% have no answer on their performance, but agreed that classroom participation influenced performance.

Venry and King (1998) reported that students who have truant problems generally suffer academically and socially, according to Baker and Jansen (2000), students who are always absent from school always tend to have lower achievement in school learning. Baker and Jansen (2000) have equally shown that sustained truancy leads to school dropout. In addition, schools that experience high rates absenteeism suffer loss of learning for students and loss of instructional time.

Mayer and Metchell (1993) reported in their survey study using 814 hoodlum as subjects that 67% of them admitted being constantly absent from school during their school days. Thus, the implications to absenteeism are felt outside the classroom as well. Continued loss of instruction or poor academic achievement among students with high absenteeism are essential characteristics of students who later drop out of school. These researchers stressed that those who drop out of school frequently move on to a life of delinquency and crime.

Lotz and Lee (1999) discovered from their study that truancy leads to delinquency and later to adult crime. Using total of 380 inmates in Georgia High School dropouts, they further asserted that indicators such as subject failure, low school effort, low reading achievement and reiteration in previous grades are common among students who exhibit absenteeism. Students who attend school regularly are more likely to get the most they can out of their time at school and therefore, more likely to achieve their potentials and less likely to take part in antisocial or criminal behaviour.

Methodology

Design of the Study

The study adopted ex-post factor method in order to get the desired responses of the subjects for reorientation and counseling. An ex-post facto research is one in which the research has no control or cannot manipulate independent variables because the situation under study already exists. The study was conducted in Rivers State.

Research Instrument

The study was conducted in Rivers State. The study involve the use two instruments namely: Students' opinion questionnaire (SOQ), tests in English language and mathematics achievement as data collection. Section A, and B. A was designed to elicit data on respondents' demographic

information while section B consisted of 25 items with 4 options objective test items in mathematics and English language respectively.

The questions were adapted from past questions papers in the West African Senior Certificate Examination and in line with their scheme in English language and Mathematics

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The stratified random sampling technique was used to select 35 public secondary schools, random technique was used for selection of students in a particular arm, using the register and 1,497 senior secondary school two (SSII) Students were selected.

Results

To test the research question, the responses from the students were categorized into three levels (high, moderate and low) of truancy based on their total score in truancy items. The students whose scores on truancy were between 6 to 9 marks (25%- 39%) were classified as low in truancy, while students whose scores were between 10 to 16 marks (40%-69%) were classified as moderate. Furthermore, their counterparts whose scores were between 17-24 marks (70% -100%) were classified as high in truancy. Dependent variables are scores in English Language, Mathematics and overall performance when both subjects were combined.

Research Question

To what extent does the level of truancy influence students' academic performance?

Table 1.
Mean and Standard Deviation of the Levels of Influence of Truancy on Students' Performance

Subject	Truancy	N	Mean	SD
English	Low	587	11.57	3.84
	Moderate	666	10.25	3.62
	High	244	7.78	3.21
	Total	1497	10.37	3.86
Mathematics	Low	587	11.52	4.11
	Moderate	666	10.13	3.84
	High	244	7.64	3.23
	Total	1497	10.27	4.08
Overall	Low	587	23.05	6.18
	Moderate	666	20.36	5.64
	High	244	15.39	4.56
	Total	1497	20.61	6.27

The data in table 1 above indicates that in all the subjects, the low level truancy group had the highest mean score of 11.57, followed by the moderate level group with 10.25, and then the high level of truancy group with 7.78.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁: The level of truancy does not significantly influence students' academic performance

Table 2

One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the Influence of Truancy on Students' Performance in English Languages, Mathematics and Overall Performance

Subject	Sources of Variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P-level
English	Between groups	2496.32	2	1248.16	94.06	0.000
	Within groups	19831.34	1496	13.27		
	Total	22327.66	1496			
Mathematics	Between groups	2617.28	2	1308.64	87.89	0.000
	Within groups	22245.53	1494	14.89		
	Total	24862.80	1496			
Overall	Between groups	10164.11	2	5082.06	156.23	0.000
	Within groups	48591.78	1494	32.53		
	Total	58755.89	1496			

The table shows that the F-values for English Language, mathematics and overall are 94.06, 87.89 and 156.23 respectively. These F-values are significant at 0.000 ($P < 0.05$) which is less than 0.05 level of significance; hence the null hypothesis was rejected for all the subject areas. So it indicated that truancy has a significant influence on the performance of students in English, mathematics and the overall.

However, due to the significant influence of truancy on students' performance in the various subject areas a post-hoc test using Scheffe's test was conducted. This was to determine the direction of influence. The results obtained are as summarized and presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Determination of the Direction of the Difference on Students' Performance on English Language, Mathematics and Overall Using Scheffe's Test

Subject	Compared grouped means	Mean Difference	P-level
English	Low vs Moderate	1.38*	0.000
	Low vs High	4.05*	0.000
	Moderate vs High	2.67*	0.000
Mathematics	Low vs Moderate	1.36*	0.000
	Low vs High	4.29*	0.000
	Moderate vs High	2.93*	0.000

Overall	Low vs Moderate	2.73*	0.000
	Low vs High	8.31*	0.000
	Moderate vs High	5.58*	0.000

*Significant at .05 level of significance

Table 3 shows that all the compared group means yielded a significant mean difference at 0.000 ($P < 0.05$), hence they are all significant at 0.05 level.

The findings showed that truancy significantly influences students' academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and overall academic performance. The findings further revealed that in all the subjects, the low level truancy group had the highest mean scores, followed by moderate and high group as an affirmation to the work of Miller and Martin (1995), who found out that classroom participation influences students' performance. In other words, students' school performance is related to classroom participation. It means that regular attendance influences performance just as the low level truancy group performs better than the other groups. The school learning determines one's performance. They further explained that school learning motivates learning and encourages performance.

In the same vein, the findings are consistent with Veriry and King's (1998), who reported that students who are truants generally suffer academically and socially.

The implication is that when a student attends lesson regularly, there is this in-built confidence he or she exudes as he or she interacts with others in a given lesson. Baker and Jansen (2000) found that students who are always absent from school always tend to have lower achievement in school learning. It was also discovered that sustained truancy leads to school drop out.

Psychological Implication

The findings of this study implicated in the prevalence of negative values and attitude thus the subjects prefer social activities such as playing games and refusal to do their home work in learning. Individuals who can control their own future and believe they are effective in learning do not run out of school without permission while those who are high in truancy act as though forces beyond their control are important factors in determining their learning. Some students run out of school and never come back. Some skip classes because of assignments. These are psychological implications for all those responsible for human resources development especially the teachers, educational counselors, curriculum planners, school administrators and government in effecting a change in attitudes of truants.

Conclusion

Viewed from Psychological Perspective, truancy can cease immediately to pose a problem of academic performance and development of skills for employment. After all, truancy to a large extent is an offshoot of misplaced values. The implementation of the recommendations in this paper is a sure pathway toward halting the tide of truancy in this nation's school learning.

Recommendations

Based on the Psychological implications of the findings, the researcher has made the following recommendations:

- (1) Students should be enlightened on the on the importance of school learning and proper use time in school and at home by their teachers counselors parents and stakeholders.
- (2) Compulsory school attendance laws should be made by the Legislators.
- (3) Since Students who are low in truancy learn better, students attention should be directed to school acceptable behaviour such as punctuality.

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Questionnaire

Section A (Personal Data)

Instruction: Please fill in or tick () reflect the option which best apply to you.

1. Name of School:.....
2. Sex: Male () Female ()
3. Class: SS2 Arts () SS2 Social Sciences () SS2 Sciences ()
Age bracket (a) 12-13 ()
4. Age Bracket a. 12-13 () b. 14-16 () c. 17 and above ()
5. In our parlour, there are telephone(s): Computer (s) () None ()
6. Our computer is connected to the Internet Yes () No ()
7. I own a cell phone Yes () No ()

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I do not like missing school morning assembly.				
2.	I can play football with other children instead of attending classes.				
3.	I sometimes skipped- classes/school without permission from my class teacher.				
4.	I do not leave school without permission from my class teacher.				
5.	I stay at home anytime we are to submit home-work in school so as to avoid punishment.				
6	I can run out of school during break time and never return.				