

INFLUENCE OF TRUANCY ON JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA.

J.O. OYEKANMI, Ph.D

*Faculty of Education,
Department of Language Education-English,
Imo State University, Owerri,
Imo State.*

Abstract

Truancy of students in schools and class lessons has become an issue of concern to researchers and education stakeholders as its negative consequences cannot be over-looked. This study was Survey. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 240 samples among Junior School 2 students from six public secondary schools in rural and urban of three of the twenty-seven local government areas in the three senatorial zones of Imo State, Nigeria. Three Research Questions were drawn and a 4-point Likert rating scale questionnaire with Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient 0.61 was used to generate data while Pearson Correlation Matrix and Multiple Regression Analysis were used to analyze data to show the multi/co-linearity among the predictor variables. Findings revealed socio-economic status of parents; peer influence; unappealing schools' social and academic settings; insufficient academic workloads; laxities in school discipline; and lack of strong tie between school and homes as causes of truancy in schools and class lessons. Furthermore, mean scores of regular-in- school students' academic achievements were better than the truants'. Education stake-holders should therefore join efforts to curb truancy in schools and classes. Government should enforce discipline in schools; make school environment friendly, and give rewards for regularity and punctuality in schools and classes.

Key Words: truancy, academic achievement, subject attendance register, bullying, English language, school tone, discipline, success.

Truancy is a universal schooling problem. It is not just a problem, but an indicator of other problems. There is no universally accepted definition of truancy as different people give different definitions and meanings of truancy to describe different occasions when it occurs. There are a number of expressions in English which refer to truancy. In South Africa, the slang used is bunking, mulling, skipping or jippo. In Jamaica, it is called sculling. In Guyana skulking. In Antigua and Barbuda, it is called

skudding. In New Zealand and Australia truancy is called wagging, bunking, "jigging", ditching, or skipping school. It is called bunking (off) or skiving or wagging[citation needed], in the United Kingdom and India, mitching, wagging or on the knock. In Wales it is called sagging. In Liverpool, it is called bunking or cutting class, dogging, skiving, playing tickie or puggin (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/canada>: retrieved on 6th June, 2016). In Nigeria, being a multilingual country, names given to truancy depend on culture and the environment where it occurs. Among the three principal tribes (languages), the Yorubas call a truant "isansa", the Hausas call it "dan iska", "shashasha", or "jahili" while the Ibos call such a truant "efulefu", or "agafu".

Traditionally, truancy is the act of missing school on a regular basis for no good reasons. According to Garry (2009), truancy is any intentional but unauthorized absence from compulsory schooling. However it is said, the term typically describes a deviant behaviour; absence from schooling by students out of their own free will, and which usually does not refer to legitimate "excused absence" such as ones related to medical conditions. Truancy may also refer to the attitude of students who go to school but do not go into the classes to study or interact with others.

However, there is much truant behaviour both inside and outside the schools. In view of this, Emeka, (2008) holds that although there are no available statistics of truancy in Nigeria.

Tyerman, (2009) identified and categorized problems responsible for students' poor performances to teachers, problems traceable to students (truancy), problems caused by parents' socio-economic status, and society at large, and problems of government and poor funding of education. It is against this general background that this study was conceived to investigate possible effects of truancy on the academic performances of secondary school students in English Language classes in selected schools in the three senatorial zones of Imo State, Nigeria.

The complexity in defining this term "truancy" is the fact that most people have divergent views on the subject. In his own view, Anderson (1968) cited in Okara (2005), said that truancy is absence from school for reasons other than illness or special situation approved by the school, while Miller, (2010) stated that truancy is absence from school without lawful cause(s), and without permission of the parents. Students' absence from school for unexcused reasons is referred to as truancy. Agencies responsible for regulating public schools frequently adopt compulsory attendance for students as requirements for academic excellence, with exceptions for students on grounds of illness and other special, known, and approved conditions. Even in Nigerian tertiary institutions, 75% (seventy-five percent), if not a hundred percent, of attendance at lectures is a condition that guarantees a candidate qualified to sit for an examination.

Truancy is a function of many social, economical, psychological, physical and environmental factors. It is common for illegal absence to be considered as truancy, regardless of parental knowledge or support for the child's behavior (inner London Education Authority, (1980) cited in Oyekanmi, (2013). It is very disheartening to see a

great number of secondary school students roaming the streets when manual labour or classroom academic works are going on. Sad to say that some of these children left home as though going to school but sneak out of their English Language classes to avoid teachers' presence possibly for not doing take-home assignments and which may attract some punishment; lack of interest in a school subject or teacher, and for idleness sake. The same students likewise return home at the appropriate time from school to deceive their parents.

The reason why a student misses school and class works, according to (Ukeje, 2004) differs depending on the age and circumstances of each student. According to Sense, (2012) sometimes, a student will skip school because they feel unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. Other students may miss school because of family issues, financial demands, substance abuse, or mental health problems. Factors contributing to truancy commonly stem from three core areas: the school, the family and the community.

One of the common causes of truancy in children is the influence of friends and peers. Tyerman (2009) discovers that many times these peers are seen encouraging truancy as a status-seeking activity or as a way of joining in or blending in. The child's natural instinct to want to be a part of a larger crowd or group dynamic will take over, even if they are taught better habits. Often times this same dynamic is prevalent in the face of any resistance the child may put forth, prompting teasing or goading the child into truanting.

According to Ajila & Olutola (2006), what is classed as truancy can depend largely on the school's attitude to the 'truant' or their problems. Relationships with teachers, seen as lacking respect/fairness, play a large factor in truancy rates among children. Often times, this inability to get along with teachers and/or students will result in disciplinary problems which may lead to suspension, or expulsion. Of course, being away from the school either voluntarily or at the school's demand can have an adverse affect on the student's academic performance, resulting in not being able to keep up with school work, getting poor grades, or even failing. A school may also be remiss in not notifying parents/guardians of absences.

This feeds into the larger school category as a whole, encompassing not only relationships with teachers and issues of fair treatment but also the content and delivery of the curriculum, seen as lacking in relevance and stimulus. At this point, citing Stuff (1985), Seeley (2007) opines that the factors coming together are oftentimes consolidated into the "standard" excuse from children regarding school and truancy, namely that they don't like school in general or that they don't like the particular school they are attending. Compounding the problem is the ease with which some pupils slip away unnoticed and how their school systems do not have in place a method to deter them. For example inconsistent and ineffective school attendance policies, in conjunction with poor record keeping, may cause a school to inadequately identify a child's special education needs.

Closely related to the issue of a child's relationship with school is the matter of bullying. Schuss & Smith (2008), purports that bullying could be a factor that contributes to an unsafe school environment. If a child does not feel safe at school, or on the way to/from school, they are much more likely to become truant. Bullying occurs for many reasons and it goes beyond the one isolated instance of harassment either because of teachers' inability to control, or problems arising from the child's own personality or learning abilities. A parent might say they're keeping their child off school because they're being bullied. The school might call it truancy.

Whitney & Child, (2003) reiterates individual (personal) factors related to child truancy such as lack of self-esteem/social skills/confidence; poor peer relations; lack of academic ability; special needs; and lack of concentration/self-management skills. Researchers have discovered that many chronically truant children had a job, a family to support, or a trouble they are managing, thus forcing them to make a choice between personal life and school. For sure, when a child gets married, gets pregnant and/or becomes a parent, the risk of truancy increases. Often times, the risky behaviors are further instigated if the child develops or has already developed an alcohol or drug problem (Whitney, 2006).

Family factors that contribute to truancy in students are innately personal in nature. Parentally condoned absence is especially influential, as it reinforces the lack of consequences for irresponsible/unwanted behavior on the part of the child. Parental attitudes to education are crucial to school's success in keeping children in school; often times a parent condoning truancy (albeit overt or tacit) is construed as the parent's not valuing education. Miller (2010), lamentably comments on the socio-economic status of most Nigerian parents who indiscriminately sanction their children's absence from school by sending a note or making a call. Schools should be able to enlist the support of parents when it comes to tackling truancy.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to highlight, through literature, the causes of truancy in schools and class-works, its social effects on the truants and the society, characteristics of truants' family through literature, and its influence on their academic achievement in English language among the Junior Secondary students in Owerri Education Zone 1 of Imo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

Based on the stated problems, the following research questions and hypotheses were tested and answered by this study:

Research Question1: What is the influence of Predictor variables (Learner Factors, Parental Factors, Teacher Factors and School Factors) on achievement of truancy students in English Language lessons?

Research Question 2: What is the joint composite influence of predictor variables (Learner Factors, Parental Factors, Teacher Factors, and School Factors) on achievement of truant students in English Language lessons?

Research Question 3: What is the relative influence of predictor variables (Learner Factors, Parental Factors, Teacher Factors, and School Factors) on achievement of truant students in English Language lessons?

Scope of the Study

The study examined the causes of truancy in schools and in English Language lessons, and its influence on their academic achievement in English language among the Junior Secondary School 2 students in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.

Methodology

This is a survey study. The target population comprised of all Junior Secondary School 2 students in Imo State. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 240 homogeneous samples in Owerri Education Zone 1 of Imo State, Nigeria. A 4-point Likert rating scale questionnaire with reliability coefficient 0.61 and a 50- item objective English Language test with four options (A-D) among which one was the correct answer while the other three options were distracters were administered on the samples. The items were on Test of Orals, Written Comprehension, Lexis and Structures, and Summary Writing. From these, data were generated and analyzed using ANOVA to establish findings.

Results and Discussion:

Research Question1: What is the relationship between Predictor variables (Learner Factors, Parental Factors, Teacher Factors and School Factors) and achievement of truancy students in English Language Lesson?

Table 1: Matrix table showing the relationship of predictor variables on the achievement in English Language of truant students in English Language lessons

	ATE	LF	PF	TF	SF
ATE	1.000				
LF	.073	1.000			
PF	-0.026	.314**	1.000		
TF	-.125	.106	.143	1.000	
SF	.032	.092	.111	.079	1.000
Mean	12.20	14.70	14.76	14.34	14.79
Std.D	4.761	2.499	2.294	1.813	1.914

Note: ATE = Achievement of Truants in English Language lessons, LF =Learner Factors, PF= Parental Factors, TF =Teacher Factors, SF= School Factors

Relating to achievement of truants in English Language lessons as influenced by predictor variables (learner factors, parental factors, teacher factors and school factors), it is observed from Table 1 that at $p < .05$, there is no multi/co-linearity between or among the variables of study. Also, the intercorrelation matrixes of the correlation coefficients of the predictors (parental factors and learner factors) contribute significantly and positively. The criteria are mostly significant though some are positive while others are negative. The table shows that there is a positive influence of predictor variables on the achievement of truants in English Language lessons.

A general overview shows that predictor variables have the strongest influence on the achievement of truant students in English Language lessons. This finding agrees with Okara, (2005), Garry, (2007), and Emeka (2008) who all discovered that most students skip schooling and attendances at school lessons on the basis of the predictor variables (learner factors, parental factors, teacher factors and school factors) examined in this study. They went further to suggest that all education stake holders must work collaboratively to check rate of truancy in schools and at class lessons among our Nigerian school learners.

Research Question 2: What is the joint composite influence of predictor variables (Learner Factors, Parental Factors, Teacher Factors, and School Factors) on achievement of truant students in English Language Lessons?

Table 2: Regression Summary of the predictor variables on the criterion variables

R=.142 R Square=.020 Adjusted R Square=.184 St. Error of the Estimate=4.794					
Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	54.012	4	13.503	.587	.003
Residual	2643.188	115	22.984		
Total	2697.200	119			

Table 4.3 shows that the multiple correlation coefficients (R) of all the combined independent variables on achievement of truancy students in English Language lessons is 0.142. The adjusted R^2 , which estimates the variance accounted for by the combined independent variables to the dependent variable measure is 0.184, which implies that there is 18.4% contribution/influence of all the independent variables (Learner Factors, Parental Factors, Teacher Factors and School Factors) on achievement of truant students in English Language lessons. It also shows that the combination of the independent variables is significant in predicting the achievement of truant students in English Language lessons ($F_{(4, 115)} = .587, P < 0.05$). This means that the relationship is linear and

therefore all the predictor variables, specified models, significantly predict the Dependent Variables (i.e. on achievement of truant students in English Language lessons).

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This finding agrees with Ukeje, (2004), Tyerman, (2009), and Whitney, (2006) who discovered that the causes and influence of truancy on students could be compositely measured and observed on the affected students' academic, social and moral outputs. They, therefore, suggested that since this deviant behaviour has negative implications on both the affected child and much more on the society to which the truant belongs, the school must be more vigilant and be up to the responsibilities she is saddled with.

Research Question 3: What are the relative influences of the predictor variables on achievement of truancy students in English Language Lesson?

Table 3:Relative contribution of the predictor variables on the criterion variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1(Constant)	17.148	5.599		3.063	.003
Learner factors	-.124	.186	.065	.668	.003
Parent factors	.016	.204	.008	.079	.937
Teacher factor	-.307	.247	-.117	-1.243	.216
School factors	.070	.233	.028	.302	.001

The table 3 above shows the relative contribution of predictor variables on the criterion variable. It revealed that two out of the four variables significantly contribute to achievement of truancy student in English Language these are School Factor ($\beta =$

0.028, $t(115) = 0.302$ and Learner Factors ($\beta = 0.065$, $t(115) = 0.668$ at $P < 0.05$ significantly contribute to the criterion while Teacher Factors ($\beta = -.117$, $t(115) = -1.243$ and Parental Factors ($\beta = .008$, $t(115) = 0.079$, $p > 0.05$ do not contribute significantly to achievement of truant students in English Language lessons.

This finding agrees with Ajila & Olutola, (2006); Seeley, (2007); Miller, (2010), and Sense, (2012) who found out that each of the predictor variables (learner factors, parental factors, teacher factors and school factors), contribute significantly to students' truancy in schools. Schuss & Smith, (2008) lamentably emphasized the negative implications this truancy behaviour has on the truants, his/her family, the society and our educational system in particular. He therefore suggested that home and school must work collaboratively together to curb this erring behaviour.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Students who ran away incessantly from English Language lessons had reasons for their actions.. It is sad to note that the predictor variables under study (learner factors, parental factors, teacher factors and school factors) had significant influence on truant students in English Language lessons. Students who were regular in English Language lessons performed better than the truants even though some of the truants would have performed better than they did if they had not been playing truancy due to the factors examined in this study.

It is therefore suggested that peer influence should be controlled by parents as they monitor peers their children keep and check their school works in English Language regularly at home. Parents should, in the same vein, value their children's education, most importantly the relevance of English Language and endeavour to provide English Language lesson materials their children need to facilitate good and meaningful teaching-learning interactions that will eventually enhance active learning. It must not be forgotten to emphasize the need for schools to provide English Language lesson attendance register, monitor students' attendances in English Language lessons, have rewards for good attendance at lessons and measure of punishment for truants at English Language lessons, and routine inspection of students' workbooks in English Language should be done to check laziness on behalf of English language teachers and truancy among students.

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