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PREVALENCE, CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF TRUANCY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDIES: A CASE STUDY OF ESE ODO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the prevalence, causes and effects of truancy among secondary school students. A survey research design was used for the study. The population comprised all secondary school teachers in Ese-Odo Local Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select one hundred teachers from three rural schools and three urban schools. Three research questions and three hypotheses were raised for the study. Questionnaire on prevalence, causes and effects of truancy among secondary school students was used as instrument to collect data. Mean, rank order and t-test statistics were used to analyse the data. Results of the study showed that there is prevalence of truancy among secondary school students, causes and effects of truancy were also revealed. It was found that there is no significant difference in the prevalence, causes and effects of truancy between rural and urban secondary school students. Based on this finding, recommendations on collaborative efforts among government, school, teachers and parents to reduce truancy to the barest minimum were made.

KEYWORDS: Education, Truancy and Absenteeism.

INTRODUCTION

The school is traditionally a place where discipline is imbibed and total educational experience is acquired. The day-to-day school activities are usually guided by rules and regulations for the maintenance of law and order. One of the aims of education is to promote a sound conduct and behaviour of individual and develop the students physically, mentally and emotionally. The common rules against noise making in the classroom, light out in hostel, open day regulation for boarding students, regular attendance order and punctuality in school are meant to guide the students' behaviour socially, morally and of course academically. These rules are to safeguard and enhance discipline on the part of students. Any contrary act or conduct to the rules amount to violation of the laws and a serious act of indiscipline which attracts laid down punishment.

Truancy means different things to different people. Even though truancy is commonly thought to be a problem among academically weak students who are overtaxed at school, it is however generally described as any intentional unauthorised absence from compulsory schooling (Davidson, 2003). This definition implies that truancy is an active decision on the part of the students to skip a lesson or a day at school and it excludes absence for reasons such as illness. It is absence which students themselves indicated or know would be unacceptable to teachers.

Truancy is a risk maker for premature school dropout. It has both educational and sociological effects on students. It may lead a child to drug addiction and in most cases students that absent from school would be retarded and have score below average in the class because they miss normal school lessons and the academic school training which they supposed to have acquired.

Truancy and absenteeism lead to frustration in the sense that when a child repeats a class for more than two or three years, he will get tired and become academically frustrated. Truancy could result into poor academic achievement, losing friends and disruption class work. It affects behaviour of students, reduces ability to meet instructional target and damage school reputation. Truants are often absent from school for such a period of time that it is difficult, if not impossible for them to catch up. This leads to further disengagement from school, teacher and ultimately can lead to serious anti-social behaviour like juvenile delinquency.

Globally, truancy has been regarded as a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the educational programme and has caused a lot of setbacks for secondary school students in their educational pursuit (Animasahun, 2007).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the effort made by parents, teachers and government in the past and even present to wage war against all forms of indiscipline in the school, students still involve themselves in various acts that are immensely contradictory to the rules and regulations to help them. The issue of truancy is as old as the school itself and it has general serious concern among the school authority, parents and all stakeholders of education in both primary and secondary school system. As a result of this ugly development, educational goals stated to be achieved at these levels have not been fully realized.

The academic performance of students is becoming increasingly poor most especially in important subjects like English Language and Mathematics and the resultant effect is examination malpractice. Truancy is seen as one of the factors which can impede academic progress of pupils/students. Therefore, this study aims at investigating prevalence, causes and effects of truancy in schools so that in line with other scholars various suggestions could be raised to combat such problems in our schools.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to find out prevalence, causes and effects of truancy among secondary school students. Specifically, this study is designed to:

1. find out prevalence of truancy among secondary school students.
2. investigate causes of truancy among secondary schools students.
3. examine effects of truancy among secondary school students.

Research Questions

1. What is the prevalence of truancy among secondary school students?
2. What are the causes of truancy among secondary school students?
3. What are the effects of truancy among secondary school students?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of truancy between rural and urban secondary school students.
2. There is no significant difference in the causes of truancy between rural and urban secondary school students.
3. There is no significant difference in the effects of truancy between rural and urban secondary school students.

METHODOLOGY

Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised all secondary school teachers in Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State. Simple random sampling was used to select one hundred teachers from three rural and three urban secondary schools in the Local Government Area. A self-constructed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was divided into five sections namely.

Section A: Demographic information of the respondents.

Section B: Items on prevalence of truancy among secondary school students.

Section C: Items on causes of truancy among secondary schools' students.

Section D: Items on effects of truancy among secondary school students.

Items were rated on Likert type scale of five options i.e Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (UD). The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher to ensure thorough completion and hundred percent submission. Descriptive statistics and t-test were used to analyse the data.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of truancy among secondary school students?

Table 1: Prevalence of Truancy among Secondary School Students

S/N	ITEM	MEAN	RANKING
1.	Students engage in other activities outside the school during the school hours.	3.79	2 nd
2.	Students absent themselves from school without due permission from school authority	4.28	1 st
3.	Students come to school anytime they like within the school hours.	3.72	3 rd
4.	Students come to school regularly but often go home whenever they like	3.57	5 th
5.	Students visit other places of interest other than school during school hours	3.64	4 th

From Table 1, it was revealed that students absent themselves from school without due permission from school authorities which was ranked 1st with 4.28 as mean. Students engage in other activities outside the school during the school hours ranked 2nd with 3.79 as mean. Students come to school anytime they like within the school hours ranked 3rd with 3.72 as mean. Students visit other places of interest other than school during school hours ranked 4th with 3.64 as mean. Students come to school regularly but often go home whenever they like ranked 5th with 3.57 as mean.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of truancy among secondary school students?

Table 2: Causes of Truancy among Secondary School Students.

S/N	ITEM	MEAN	RANKING
6.	Poor relationship between parents and children	3.99	4 th
7.	Poor physical condition at home.	3.98	5 th
8.	Use of corporal punishment in the house.	3.41	16 th
9.	Lack of parent interest in the child's welfare	4.03	3 rd
10.	Economic status of the parents.	3.91	7 th
11.	Education profile of the parents/guardian	3.71	10 th
12.	Negative attitude of parents to education	3.92	6 th
13.	Peer group influence	4.44	1 st
14.	Poor relationship with classmates	3.61	12 th
15.	Bullying by senior students.	3.65	11 th
16.	Loss of interest in academics	4.09	2 nd
17.	Distance of the students home to school	3.44	15 th
18.	Teachers attitude to students	3.87	8 th
19.	Teachers methods of teaching	3.47	14 th
20.	Poor administration of the school such as lack of school discipline	3.82	9 th
21.	High cost of school fees and educational materials e.g. textbooks	3.50	13 th

Table 2 shows cause of truancy among secondary school students. Peer group influence ranked 1st with a mean of 4.44. Loss of interest in academic ranked 2nd with a mean of 4.09. Lack of parental interest in the child's welfare ranked 3rd with a mean of 4.03. Poor relationship between parents and children ranked 4th with a mean of 3.99. Poor physical condition at home ranked 5th with a mean 3.98. Negative attitude of the parents to education ranked 6th with a mean of 3.92. Economic status of the parents ranked 7th with a mean of 3.91. Poor administration of the school such as lack of school discipline ranked 9th with a mean of 3.92, Educational profile of the parents/guardian ranked 10th with a mean of 3.65. Poor relationship with classmate ranked 12th with a mean of 3.61. High cost of school fees and educational materials e.g. textbooks ranked 13th with a mean of 3.60. Poor method of teaching ranked 14th with a mean of 3.47. Distance of the student's home to school ranked 15th with a mean of 3.44. Use of Corporal punishment in the house ranked 16th with a mean of 3.41.

Research Question 3: What are the effects of truancy among secondary school students?

Table 3: Effects of Truancy among Secondary School students.

S/N	ITEM	MEAN	RANKING
22.	It affects smooth running of the school system.	4.18	5 th
23.	Some teachers may become helpless and disorganized in their task of imparting knowledge in the students.	3.82	8 th
24.	The students may not have time to concentrate on their studies.	3.95	7 th
25.	It could damage school reputation	4.21	3 rd
26.	It may reduce the student's ability to meet instructional targets.	4.21	3 rd
27.	Truancy may lead to disruption in class activity.	4.12	6 th
28.	It may result into poor academic achievement by the students.	4.37	2 nd
29.	It may lead a child to become hardened criminal in future such as engaging in risky alcohol drinking and cigarette smoking.	4.42	1 st

Table 3 revealed effects of truancy among secondary school students. It may lead a child to become hardened criminal in future such as engaging in risky alcohol drinking and cigarette smoking ranked 1st with a mean of 4.42. It may result into poor academic achievement by the students ranked 2nd with a mean of 4.37. It may reduce the students ability to meet instructional targets ranked 3rd with a mean of 4.21. It could damage school reputation ranked 3rd with a mean of 4.21. it affects smooth running of the school system ranked 5th with a mean of 4.18. Truancy may lead to disruption in class activity ranked 6th with a mean of 3.95. The students may not have time to concentrate on their studies ranked 7th with a mean of 3.95. Some teachers may become helpless and disorganized in their task of imparting knowledge in the students ranked 8th with a mean of 3.82.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of truancy between rural; and urban secondary school students.

Table 4: T-test showing difference between rural and urban students in the prevalence of truancy.

School Location	N	X	SD	Df	Cal.t-value	Critical-t value
Urban	59	3.84	0.98			
				98	0.38	1.96
Rural	41	3.80	0.96			

Level of significance, $P=0.05$

Table 4 shows that, t-calculated (0.38) is less than the t-table (1.96). Hence, the research hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between rural and urban students in the prevalence of truancy is accepted. This implies that the level of prevalence of truancy in the rural secondary schools is the same with that of the urban secondary schools.

Hypotheses Two: There is no significant difference in the causes of truancy between rural and urban secondary schools' students.

Table 5: T-test showing difference in the causes of truancy between rural and urban secondary school students.

School Location	N	X	SD	Df	Cal.t-value	Critical-t value
Urban	59	3.81	0.91			
				98	0.10	1.96
Rural	41	3.80	0.88			

Level of significance, $P = 0.05$

From table 5, t-calculated is 0.10 while t-table is 1.96 meaning that the t-cal is less than the t-table. Hence, the research hypothesis which state that there is no significant difference in the causes of truancy between rural and urban secondary school students is accepted. This implies that causes of truancy in the rural schools are the same with that of urban schools.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the effects of truancy between rural and urban secondary school students.

Table 6: T-test showing the effects of truancy between rural and urban secondary school students.

School Location	N	X	SD	Df	Cal.t-value	Critical-t value
Urban	59	4.22	0.70			
				98	0.33	1.96
Rural	41	4.16	0.72			

Level of significant, $P = 0.05$

Table 6 shows t-test on the effects of truancy between rural and urban secondary school students. From the table, t-value (0.33) is less than the t-table (1.96). Hence, the research hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the effects of truancy between rural and urban secondary school students is accepted. This implies that the effects of truancy in secondary schools either rural or urban are the same.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the result show that truancy is prevalent among secondary school students. A large number of the respondents agreed that students absent themselves from school without due permission from school authority e.g. the principal or teacher as the case may be. It was revealed that students engage in other activities outside the school during school hours, students visit places of interest other than the school during school hours etc. This agrees with Animasahun (2007) assertion that globally, truancy is regarded as a canker worm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the educational programme and has caused a lot of setbacks for secondary school students in their educational pursuit.

The findings of the study also revealed that students family background e.g. lack of parent interest in the child's welfare, poor relationship between parents and children e.t.c. socio-environment of the students like peer group influence, loss of interest in academic and institutional/school related factors like teachers attitude to student and poor administration of the school are the major causes of truancy among secondary school students. This finding is in tandem with Davidson (2003) who identified causes of truancy as bully by school staff, boredom, dislike of teacher and avoidance of tests.

The study revealed effects of truancy as leading a child to become hardened criminal in future, poor academic achievement inability to meet instructional targets, damaging school reputation, affecting smooth running of the school among others. Siziya, Muulu and Rudatsikira (2007) reported that adolescents who are truants engage in risky sexual practice, illicit drug use, alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking. Henry (2007) found that high academic achievement is related to low truancy rates. Truancy hinders effective learning and could lead to poor academic performance. It breeds educational wastage and poor human power development (Nwagwu, 1999; Fareo, 2013).

CONCLUSION

It was concluded from this study that there is prevalence of truancy among secondary school students. Some of the causes of truancy are peer group influence, loss of interest in academics, lack of parent interest in child's education, poor relationship between parents and children while some of the effects of truancy are probability of becoming hardened criminal in future, poor academic achievement, damaging school image, affecting smooth running of the school system to mention few. Both rural and urban schools are affected by truancy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Teacher's school be prepared to accept changes in order to make learning interesting and thereby reduce the rate of truancy in school.
- Teacher should be aware that no society is static and a good teacher is aware of the factors that bring about change. He anticipates and prepares for such changes and realizes that as a teacher, he himself is an agent of changes.
- Parents also should take time to provide necessary materials for their children at school and they should make efforts to avoid separation or divorce so that they may be able to take proper care of their children.
- Government should accept its responsibility and give prompt attention to all matters relating to school discipline, teachers' welfare and provision of facilities such as good building, instructional material etc.
- It is necessary to create conducive environment that would be enticing and enjoyable to students. The school that makes the strongest appeal to a child is the one that has the best attendance. In order to attract students, school must be comfortable and attractive. There should be provision for exercise of social instincts of children. Class work must be interesting and worthwhile.

It is expected that adequate consideration of these suggestions would discourage truancy in secondary schools. This will in turn ensure proper training of the mind and the body to produce obedience, self-control and other virtues that contribute to and make for peaceful, productive, progressive and happy teaching and learning process.

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