

The Impact of Truant Behaviour on Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Ukum Local Government Area

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ABSTRACT The study was conducted to determine the effects of truant behaviour on academic achievement of secondary school students in Ukum. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to investigate the relationship between truancy and performance in terminal examinations; to determine the relationship between truant behaviour and performance in senior certificate examinations; and to ascertain the relationship between truancy and school dropout among secondary school students in the area. Simple probability random sampling was used to select respondents while chi-square was used in test of hypotheses. The study found that there was a significant relationship between truant behaviour and performance in terminal examinations among the students. Further, truant behaviour had no significant relationship with student's performance in the senior certificate examinations; lastly, there was a significant relationship between truancy and school dropout in the area. The study recommends for monitoring of students academic progress by parents and guardians, sanction of parents who neglect their children, punishment and reward for truants and regular school attendees, close monitoring of students by teachers to report truant cases and sanction for those involved in examination malpractice.

INTRODUCTION

Truancy is a deviant behavior that prevails in almost all formal organizations or institutions. In work places, schools, on assignment or duties, there is the tendency for some people to

voluntarily abscond, absent or disengage themselves from responsibility. This behavior has far reaching implications on the educational system of a country and academic achievement of person who engages in truant behavior (Boga, 2013)

For students, staying in school and partaking in the academic duties is the first step to a good education and in order to achieve academic excellence, the students are mandated by the school law to attend school daily but due o some factors (which work will unravel) most students absent themselves from formal school activities hence engaging in truancy. But it should be noted that truant behavior among students does not necessarily mean their absence from school alone but also not taking part in their academic responsibilities such as attending their lessons and doing their assessment. Therefore in secondary schools, there is tendency for the students to absent themselves from school or be present in school without attending lesson of fulfilling their academic obligations. When this happens there is the tendency for everyone to lose, students lose the benefits of instruction, a good academic performance, the society loses socio-economically.

In the Nigerian secondary schools truancy has become a dominant trait especially among students. This act is reflected in the student's total or partial absent from school, non attendance of lessons, abscond from non curricular activities and disengagement from school duties. This behavior is a reflection of moral decadence, has socio-economic and psychological ramifications on the student, school and society at large. Specifically, truant behavior among secondary school students in the grand scheme of things may impact on their acquisition of knowledge which has repercussions on academic performance.

In this study, the researcher recognized truancy as a delinquent act that has implications on the academic performance of secondary school student's as well as their live outcome. It is therefore on this ground that the researcher considers it's necessary/pertinent and quite imperative to carry out this research so as to determine the extent to which truancy reduces academic achievement among secondary school students in Ukum Local Government Area.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objective of the study is to determine the effects of truancy on academic achievement of secondary school pupils in Ukum Local Government Area. Specifically, the following are the objectives of the study:

- (a) To investigate the relationship between truancy and performance in terminal examinations among secondary school students in Ukum Local Government Area.

- (b) To determine the relationship between truant behaviour and performance in senior secondary certificate examinations in the area.
- (c) To ascertain if there is a relationship between truancy and school dropout among secondary school students in the Ukum.

Hypothesis of the study

(1) H_0 : There is no significant relationship between truant behaviour and failure in terminal examinations.

H_1 : There is a significant relationship between truant behaviour and performance in terminal examinations.

(2) H_0 : There is no significant relationship between truant behaviour and failure in senior certificate examinations.

H_1 : There is a significant relationship between truant behaviour and failure in senior certificate examinations.

(3) H_0 : There is no significant relationship between truant behaviour and school dropout among secondary school students in Ukum.

H_1 : There is a significant relationship between truant behaviour and school dropout among secondary school students in Ukum.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The concept of truancy

Conceptually, the term “truancy” has been defined by various ways by different people and agencies such as counselors, psychologist, sociologist, welfare authorities and educators in general. According to Carter (2009) truancy is a deliberate absence from school on the part of the pupil without the knowledge and consent of parents, absence of the pupil from school for which no reasonable or acceptable excuse is given. This definition broadens the concept considerably and makes it synonymous with unexcused absence. Collins (2010:2) conceptualized truancy in respect of students who have been registered with a school but identified as not attending school when the law says they should. This definition includes absence from particular lessons.

In the conception of Stoll (2002) truancy refers situation where by a student is absent from school for no legitimate reason. He went further to state that many students do skip either single class or even a full day school at least once during their academic career. This is

because they may want to attend a special event, prepare for promotion night or simply take what is known in the world of work as a “mental health day”. This isolated incidence (truancy) is quite typically and likely to create problems which can lead to varied set of negative and even more dangerous consequences. Similarly Adeyemo (1999) defines truancy, as a delinquent act which occurs when a child often stays away from the school without good reasons. According to Lee and Miltenberger (1996), students that are truant typically spend the time they are out of school away from their home and tend to conceal the absences from his or her parents.

Having examined the definition of truancy by different scholars or researchers, the researcher views truancy as a deliberate absence from school and non involvement of the student from school and academic responsibilities without permission or consent of parents or school authorities.

The effects of truancy on student’s academic achievement

Having identified and explained some of the causes of truancy among secondary school students, the next of focus is the review of related literature is the effects of truancy on student’s academic achievement.

Geo –Opah (2003) in his research also discovered that truants, due to absence from school academic usually repeat classes and even when they are repeating, they do not feel better because they feel they are too big for such a class. Though few of them (truants) manage to struggle through school and majority of them usually drop out of school if some form of interventions are not taken. Their level of achievement is generally poor because their emphasis is not on academics. They even see school as a form of punishment and something they are doing not for their sake but to please their parents and guardians. Students, who skip class or school, immediately fail behind in the curriculum set for them by the school. The schools suffer the blight and the lowering of its overall scoring and performance which justifies what school is awarded certain educational benefits and programs.

Students with higher truancy rates have the lowest academic achievement rates, and are more likely to drop out of school which indicates that there is a relationship between student attendance and student achievement (U.S. Department of Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2001). Students with low attendance often end up dropping out of school and put themselves at a long-term disadvantage in becoming productive citizens. They are more

likely to be welfare recipients, earn much lower salaries and lead less productive lives (U.S. Department of Education, 1996)

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) according to data they collected from their study “High School and Beyond”, on student dropout predictors concluded that low expectations, low grades combined with discipline issues and truancy were the most common reasons for students exiting schools early. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) according to data they collected from their study “High School and Beyond”, on student dropout predictors concluded that low expectations, low grades combined with discipline issues and truancy were the most common reasons for students exiting schools early.

Anomie theory

Anomie refers to the confusion that arises when social norms conflict or don't even exist. It is a state of normlessness or uprootedness which arises when there is acute disjunction between cultural goals and legitimate means available for achieving them. The theory was expounded by Merton (1957). Merton used the term to describe the discrepancy between socially accepted goals and the availability of means to achieve those goals. These socially accepted goals are education and hard work, meaning people who apply themselves to study and work will be financially successful, and those who do not succeed are labeled as either lazy or flawed. Merton used the dominant cultural goal in the United States to illustrate his assertion. To him attaining wealth is a major goal of Americans, but not all Americans possess the means to do this, especially members of minority and disadvantaged groups. Those who find the “road to riches” close to them experience anomie because an obstacle has thwarted their pursuit of a socially approved goal. When this happens, these individuals may employ deviant behaviors to attain their goals retaliate against the society, merely “make a point”.

These deviant behaviors include innovation, retreatism, ritualism and rebellion. Innovation is the attaining societal goals by illegitimate means; innovators create their own ways to go about obtaining what they want. Ritualism is the acceptance of means but forfeit of the goals. Retreatism is the rejection of both means and the goals. Rebellion is the combination of rejection of both societal goals and means and replacement for other goals and means. The primary contribution of anomie theory is also sociological in its emphasis in the role of social forces in creating truant deviance.

One of the negative sides of anomie theory has been criticized for generality. Critics note that the theory's lack of statements concerning the process of learning deviance or truancy,

including the internal motivators for deviance or truant. Like differential association theory, anomie theory does not lend itself to precise scientific study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Area of Study

Ukum is a Local Government Area of Benue state, Nigeria with its headquarters situated in Sankera. It has an area of 1,514 square kilometers (585 sq mi) and a population of 216,930 at the 2006 census. Their main occupation is farming.

Research Design

This study will adopt a descriptive survey research design. This design is chosen because it will enable the researcher to study a few people who will be selected through appropriate sampling techniques to be representatives of the entire group.

Sample and Sample Procedure

Sample for the study is 250 respondents who were secondary school students, selected using simple randomly sampling method probability. The respondents were drawn from secondary school students in the area. In the process of selection of the respondents, the researcher used balloting method to select respondents.

Instrument of data collection

Questionnaire was the instrument of used to elicit information from teachers on truancy among secondary school students.

In the process of data collection, the researcher with her trained research assistant took five days to distribute the questionnaires. The researcher and her trained assistant went around distribution the questionnaires to the respondents. Questionnaires were not returned on time, some were delayed for one week before collection.

Method of data analysis

Descriptive statistics is adopted for data analysis in this study. The research questions will be answered by means of descriptive statistics using simple percentages and analytical tables while chi-square was used to test hypotheses through SPSS version 16.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 presents socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in respect of age, sex and marital status. The Table has shown that respondents in the age ranges of 11-15 were majority (127) representing 50.8 percent. Those in the age range of 16-20 were minority (78) representing 31.2 percent while respondents who were in the age range of 20 and above were 45 representing 18 percent.

In Table 2, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between truant behaviour and performance in terminal examinations has been rejected. This is because the calculated chi-square value which is 17.181 is greater than the tabulated value of 15.812 with 1 degree of freedom on 0.01 level of significance.

In Table 3, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between truant behaviour and performance in Senior Certificate Examinations has been accepted. This is due to the fact that the calculated chi-square value which is 1.269E2 is less than the tabulated value of 1222.589 under 1 degree of freedom with significance level of 0.01.

In the Table 4, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between truant behaviour and dropout among secondary school students has been rejected. This is because the calculated chi-square value which is 0.599 is greater than the tabulated value of 0.367 under 1 degree of freedom with significance level of 0.01.

DISCUSSIONS

Findings have proved that truant behaviour have significant effect of students academic achievement in terms of their performance in terminal examinations as it leads to failure in these examinations with X^2 calculated value of 17.181 being greater the tabulated value of 15.812 with 1 degree of freedom on 0.01 significance level. This may not be unconnected with high rates on truants who are likely to repeat classes due to failure in terminal examinations. This findings confirms study by Geo-Opah (2003) who argues that due to absence from school student usually repeat classes which testifies their failure the these examinations as they also have tendency to fall behind curriculum set for them

Findings showed that truant behaviour have no significant effect of students performance in Senior Certificate Examinations with X^2 calculated value of 1.269E2 being less than the tabulated of 122.589 with 1 degree of freedom on 0.01 significance level. This findings show a dysfunction in the educational sector in the area which is a reflection of Nigerian situation.

This indicates a likelihood of serious examination malpractice at the senior certificate examination level.

The results have revealed that there is a significant relationship between truant behaviour and dropout among secondary students as the calculated chi-square value of 0.599 was greater than the tabulated of 0.367 with 1 degree of freedom on 0.01 significance level. This shows that truancy have negative consequences on dropout as students who chronic absentees tend to dropout in the long run. This finding collaborates with arguments by Geo-Opah (2003) that students who are truants have the tendency to drop out of school as schooling does not make meaning to them. The students see schooling as punishment and something they are doing for the interest of their parents and not for their interest.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study it has been concluded that truant behaviour have negative effects on academic achievement among students of secondary schools in Ukum through poor performance or failure in terminal examinations and dropout cases. However, truant behaviour has no negative effect of the performance of the students in senior certificate examinations, thus indicating severe examination malpractice. That it is difficult for students who could perform good in terminal examinations to suddenly become better in senior certificate examinations that seems to be tougher.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been made for the study:

- (a) There is the need for parents or guardians to monitor their children or ward academic progress by checking their work or note books so as to determine whether they are actually attending school on daily basis. If is found that they are not attending classes, necessary actions should be taken to correct the abnormal behaviour.
- (b) Government needs to set up laws and structures that would sanction or monitor parents or guardians whose children or wards truant behaviour is as a result of their negligence.

- (c) School administrators need to initiate rewards and punishment measures for students who attend school regularly to motivate them and those who abscond.
- (d) Teachers should be more involved with their students so as to monitor them in order to report persistent cases of truant behaviour to the appropriate authorities.
- (e) Authorities should be more stringent in monitoring and invigilation of senior certificate examinations as stiff sanctions should be meted to students or teachers who are involved in examination malpractice.

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
11-15	127	50.8
16-20	78	31.2
20 and above	45	18
Sex		
Male	146	58.4
Female	104	41.6
Marital status		
Single	208	83.2
Married	41	16.4
Divorced	01	0.4

Source: Field survey, 2013

Table 2: Chi-square results of relationship between Truancy and performance in terminal examinations

Truancy	Examination performance		Total
	Pass	Fail	
Truants	19(31.3)	29(16.7)	48
Non truants	144 (131.7)	58(70.3)	202
Total	163	87	250

X^2 Calculated=17.181

X^2 Tabulated = 15.812

Degree of Freedom =1

Level of significance=0.01

Table 3: Chi-square results of relationship between Truancy and performance in Senior Certificate Examinations

Truancy	Certificate Examinations performance		Total
	Pass	Fail	
Truants	40(10.8)	8(37.2)	48
Non truants	16 (42.5)	186(165.8)	202
Total	156	194	250

X^2 Calculated=1.269E2

X^2 Tabulated = 122.589

Degree of Freedom =1

Level of significance=0.01

Table 4: Chi-square results of relationship between Truancy and Dropouts among secondary school students

Truancy	Drop-Outs	
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	Dropout	Non dropout	Total
Truants	19(16.7)	29(31.3)	48
Non truants	68 (70.3)	134(131.7)	202
Total	87	163	250

X^2 Calculated=0.599

X^2 Tabulated = 0.367

Degree of Freedom =1

Level of significance=0.01