

# Incidence of Truancy among Senior Secondary School Students in Epe Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria:

## Implications for Counselling

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examined the incidence of truancy among senior secondary school students in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State and suggests ways counselling can be used to curb the problem. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and the design was Ex-post Facto. The sample size was 119 Senior Secondary II students randomly selected from 5 out of the 22 public secondary schools in the local government area. An instrument titled "Incidence of Truancy among Secondary School Students" was used to collect data from the respondents. It had face and content validity through expert judgement and the reliability coefficient was 0.73. The data obtained was analyzed with the Z-test statistics. The results indicated that there is no significant difference between male and female students; urban and rural students and students from high and low socio-economic status homes in their indulgence in truancy. It was recommended that Form Masters/Mistresses should be more objective in taking class attendance and refer truants to guidance counsellors.*

### **Keywords**

*truancy, urban students, rural students*

### **1. Introduction**

Educational institutions all over the world (either public or private) may have been established on the premise that learners will attend classes regularly and teachers will impart knowledge to them and thereby bring about positive behavioural changes. The fact cannot be argued that students who remain in school and are always in class are likely to perform well in their studies. Buttressing this point Epstein and Sheldon (2002) and Ready (2010) opined that attendance is an important factor in school success among learners and that, better attendance is related to higher academic achievement for students.

Furthermore, Kearney and Grazyk (2014) observed that regular attendance in school is very vital for students' academic achievement, language development and social development. The authors reiterated that students who are regular in school can be successful in their future professional lives by acquiring work-related skills such as persistence and problem-solving. On the other hand, students who fail to attend school on a regular basis may perform poorly. One of the factors that may be attributed to poor attendance in school is truancy. According to Suhid and Aroff (2012), truancy is a common discipline problem globally. Again, Davies and Lee (2006) discovered that students in the United Kingdom have chosen not to attend certain classes during school hours.

In Nigeria, incidence of truancy among secondary school students appears to be on the increase and efforts made by various stakeholders may not have yielded the desired results. In fact, skipping of classes by students has become like a monster plaguing the educational system and may be comparable to examination malpractice that also seems to have defied all solutions.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the incidence of truancy among senior secondary school students and proffer ways counselling can be used to eradicate the problem.

**Truancy:** This refers to a situation where a student skips some lessons at school or leaves home but stays completely away from school.

**Urban Students:** These are learners whose schools are located in areas with basic amenities such as electricity, good roads, pipe borne water and good toilets.

**Rural students:** Rural students are those whose schools are situated in rural areas that lack good roads, electricity and pipe-borne water.

The factors responsible for truancy could be numerous and may be classified into parents-related, students-related and school-related. Sa'ad, Sabo and Dahuwa (2015) noted that in a home where there is poverty, lack of concern for the child's education, child abuse and other improper ways of child upbringing, students could easily indulge in truancy. Issues emanating from students which might be responsible for their truant behaviour could be academic, social, medical and psychological. Hopskins, Green and Burns (2011), Maduabuchi (2013) reiterated that inability to do homework, illness, lack of social competence, physical health, low self-esteem, poor peer relationship and low academic ability are some of the causes of truancy traceable to the learners.

In the school setting, there are certain issues that might ginger students into acts of truancy and these revolve around the nature of the school environment, teacher-student relationship, principals' leadership styles, methodology and the curriculum itself. Commenting on this, Chukwuka (2013) stressed that the harshness of teachers, boring classes, uncondusive environment, indiscipline in the school and lack of suitable curriculum are among the causes of truancy in secondary schools.

The effects of truancy on secondary school students could be devastating; as a result of their regular absence from classes, students may find it difficult to cope with the demands of school work, experience dwindling performance, lose interest in school and eventually drop out. Geo-Opah (2003), in Sambe, Avangar and Agba (2015), Oluremi (2013) and Boga (2013) observed that truants perform

poorly, repeat classes and drop out of school. Undoubtedly, when students are unable to complete their studies, it constitutes a waste of resources not only for parents, but for the government as well. Again, such individuals miss the opportunity to develop their potentials to the fullest and contribute meaningfully to the development of their communities and/or countries.

Additionally, truancy may also have long-term effects on students. Yahaya, Hashim, Ramli and Kadir (2010) discovered in their study that adults who were truants as adolescents were more likely to experience marital or job instability and psychological maladjustment when compared to their counterparts who were not truants as adolescents.

Oluremi (2013) conducted a research on the relationship between truancy and academic performance of secondary schools students in Southwestern Nigeria. 4 hypotheses were formulated and the chi-square and t-test statistics were used. The sample was 360 students and one of the results indicated that there was a significant difference between male and female students in their manifestation of truancy behaviour.

Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson and Kirk (2003) carried out a 12-month study of students' absence from school. Information was obtained from 13 primary, 14 secondary schools and 143 education professionals in seven Local Education Authorities in England. The sample of secondary schools students was 528 while that of primary school pupils was 662. The study revealed that a higher percentage of girls than boys in Years 7, 8 and 9 truant in all white schools.

Wright (1978) as cited by Rothman (2001) in his research on Analyses of secondary school-level data in Virginia, surveying schools on their attendance rates and aspects of the curriculum, organization and staff, found out that urban schools had the lowest attendance, then suburban schools and schools in other areas had the highest attendance rates.

Uche (1994) noted that children from parents with adequate income, good occupation and high status are likely provided with high quality private education, from Kindergarten to University level. Continuing the author observed that such children will be less delinquent than their counterparts from lower socio-economic background.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

In the distant past in Nigeria, when parents were able to monitor their children at school by paying unscheduled visits and were also highly interested on how their wards fared in schools by checking their notes or asking questions that bothered on their daily performance at school, many students were scared of indulging in truant behaviour because they would be found out. But the trend seemed to have changed because many parents are now too busy to carry out these tasks; some leave home very early in the morning and return late and exhausted, all in a bid to make both ends meet. Thus, some of these children, left in the care of housemaids are grossly unsupervised; a good number of them leave home in their uniforms in the guise of going to school and shortly after change to Mufti and in the company of their friends hang around in the streets, visit games and cinema houses, watch league football matches

or go to swimming pools. While doing these, they are sometimes tempted to engage in deviant behaviour such as smoking Indian hemp or pick-pocketing. There are other groups of students that may report in school but sneak out after a few lessons and spend the rest of the school day outside engaging in delinquent activities. Sadly enough, these truants hardly ever know when assignments are given nor submitted. This study has therefore set out to investigate the incidence of truancy among senior secondary school students in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State and utilize some counselling techniques in resolving the problem.

### **3. Hypotheses**

Three hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:

- 1) There is no significant difference between male and female senior secondary school students in their level of indulgence in truancy.
- 2) There is no significant difference between senior secondary school students from high and low socio-economic status homes in their level of indulgence in truancy.
- 3) There is no significant difference between Senior Secondary School students from urban and rural schools in their level of indulgence in truancy.

### **4. Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the incidence of truancy among senior secondary school students in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State and employ some counselling methods in solving the problem.

### **5. Methods**

This research is survey and it adopted the Ex-post Facto design which according to Yomere and Agbonifoh (1999), Whawo (2000) does not allow the investigator to manipulate the variables of the study. The study examined the incidence of truancy among Senior secondary school Two (SS II) students in Epe Local Government Area, Lagos State.

The population consisted of all Senior Secondary School Two students (SS II) in Epe Local Government Area, Lagos State. Using the simple random sampling technique, the researcher selected 5 out of the 22 public senior secondary schools. The 5 schools include 3 urban and 2 rural schools. The simple balloting method was employed to pick 30 students from each urban school (to talling up to 90 students) and 20 students from each rural school (also totalling up to 40). The instrument for the study is titled "Incidence of Truancy among Senior Secondary School Students Questionnaire" and it consists of two parts. While the first part sought information about respondents' bio-data (like sex, socio-economic status of parents and location of schools), the second part comprised 20 items that measured the level of students' truancy. A 4-point rating scale of Always (4), Often (3), Seldom (2) and Never (1) was used. The instrument has face and content validity and the reliability coefficient of 0.73

was obtained using the test-retest method. The researcher administered the questionnaire with the help of 2 research Assistants. Permission was obtained from principals of the various schools and the purpose of the study explained. Furthermore, Form Masters/Mistresses used class attendance in locating students who are persistently involved in skipping classes; the students who failed to return for classes after the long break were used. 130 copies of the questionnaire were administered but 119 were retrieved showing 91.54% return rate and the data collected were analysed with the Z-test statistics.

## 6. Presentation of Findings

### 6.1 Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between male and female senior secondary school students in their level of indulgence in truancy

**Table 1. Z-Test Analysis of the Difference between Male and Female Senior Secondary School Students in Their Level of Indulgence in Truancy**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Z-cal	Z.crit.	Sig. Level	Decision
Male Students	69	12.03	2.19	1.05	1.96	0.05	Not Significant
Female Students	50	11.60	2.23				

Source: Fieldwork, 2016.

The result on Table 1 has indicated that the calculated z-value of 1.05 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between male and female senior secondary school students in their level of indulgence in truancy.

### 6.2 Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between senior secondary school students from high and low socio-economic status homes in their level of indulgence in truancy.

**Table 2. Z-Test Analysis of Difference between Senior Secondary School Students from High and Low Socio-Economic Status Homes in Their Level of Indulgence in Truancy**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Z-cal	Z.crit.	Sig. Level	Decision
Students from high socio-economic homes	49	11.87	2.53	0.97	1.96	0.05	Not Significant
Students from low socio-economic status homes	70	11.47	1.71				

Source: Fieldwork, 2016.

The data on the above Table has revealed that the value of z-calculated is 0.97 and this is invariably lower than the critical z-value of 1.96. Thus, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted; which means that there is no significant difference between senior secondary school students from high and low socio-economic status homes in their level of indulgence in truancy.

### 6.3 Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference between senior secondary school students from urban and rural schools in their level of indulgence in truancy.

**Table 3. Z-Test Analysis of Difference between Senior Secondary School Students from Urban and Rural Schools in Their Level of Indulgence in Truancy**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Z-cal	Z.crit.	Sig. Level	Decision
Students in urban schools	65	11.70	2.64	0.18	1.96	0.05	Not Significant
Students in rural schools	54	11.31	2.14				

Source: Fieldwork, 2016.

The analysis on Table 3 has shown that the calculated z-value of 0.18 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96. This means that there is no significant difference between senior secondary school students from urban and rural schools in their level of indulgence in truancy. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

## 7. Discussion of Findings

The first finding has revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female senior secondary school students in their level of indulgence in truancy. The reason one may adduce for this is that truancy, like any other deviant behaviour can be learnt by anybody; in short gender does not place any restriction on one. This finding contradicts Oluremi (2013) whose study indicated a significant difference between male and female secondary school students in their manifestation of truancy behaviour. This result agrees with Suhid and Aroff (2012) who noted that there are reported cases of truancy among school children in Malaysia and that it cuts across gender, race and religion. The finding is at variance with the work of Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson and Kirk (2003) which revealed that a higher percentage of girls than boys in Years, 7, 8 and 9 truant in all White schools.

The second finding has shown that there is no significant difference between senior secondary school students from high and low socio-economic status homes in their level of indulgence in truancy. This result seems to suggest that the socio-economic status of students' parents have little or nothing to do with their truant behaviour. This finding contrasts the view of Uche (1994) who observed that children of parents from high socio-economic status who have been provided with high quality private education from Kindergarten to University level will be less delinquent than their counterpart from

lower socio-economic background.

The third result of this study has indicated that there is no significant difference between Senior secondary school students from urban and rural schools in their level of indulgence in truancy. This implies that students, irrespective of the location of their schools indulge in truancy. This finding corroborates the study of Wright (1978) as cited by Rothman (2001) who discovered that urban schools in Virginia had the lowest attendance, then sub-urban schools and schools in other areas had the highest attendance rates.

## **8. Conclusion**

The researcher has concluded that truancy is actually an issue plaguing the educational system in Nigeria. Truant behaviour is manifested by students across gender, socio-economic status of parents and location of schools. Consequently, some truants drop out of school and this constitutes a waste of resources to parents as well as the government and a social menace to the society.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Form Masters/Mistresses should be more objective in taking attendance and refer truants to Guidance Counsellors.
- The government should post counsellors to all public secondary schools so that they can assist school authorities in counselling students thereby minimizing truanting behaviour.
- Principals should organize Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) meetings more regularly and the issue of truancy should always be in the agenda so that school authorities and parents alike could brainstorm on strategies of eradicating truancy in secondary schools.
- School Authorities and parents should, as a matter of urgency liaise with community leaders to set up Truancy Task Force to intercept students found loitering in the street during school hours.
- Principals should introduce a scheme of giving prizes to students for regular attendance in school (either termly or annually) in order to motivate them.

## **Implications for Counselling**

Some of the implications are:

- Behaviourists believe that most human behaviour is learnt and can also be unlearned. Thus, counselors should counsel students from this viewpoint and make them realize that all they need is to harness their potentials to change the undesirable behaviour of truancy to regular attendance of classes.
- Counsellors are to work hand-in-hand with Form Masters/Mistresses of truants so as to monitor them and positively reinforce those who have modified their behaviour.
- Employing the modelling technique, counsellors should use students who are regular in class as models for truanting students to observe and imitate.
- Counsellors should organize Parents' Conference for parents/guardians of truants and make them to realize the short and long term effects of truancy on their children and themselves (parents) as well.

-Counsellors should advise parents to pay unscheduled visits to the schools of their children (especially between long break and closing period), so as to be conversant with their wards behaviour and give the necessary guidance.

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