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## Truancy and Academic Performances of Students in Secondary Schools in Aba North, Abia State South-East Nigeria

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### Abstract

*This paper investigated truancy and academic performance of students in secondary schools in Aba North, Abia State, South East Nigeria. Descriptive survey was employed and all the 250 teachers in Aba North made up the population and sample through the purposive sampling technique. A two-part, 20-item, 4-point scale instrument known as Truancy Academic Performance Questionnaire (TAPQ) was used to collect data for answering 3 research questions. TAPQ was validated by a team of experts. Test retest reliability was established at an  $r = 0.74$  using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The instrument was administered to 250 teachers. Means was used to answer the three research questions. Results of the study revealed that truancy gives rise to poor academic performance. It concluded*

*that truancy exists in secondary schools and recommended that efforts be made to provide attractive school environment for sustained stay in school.*

In recent times, education has been recognized globally as one of the universal ways of survival and improvement of the well-being of individuals and society. The advent of formal education is considered as the foundation for national development as well as the surest way of making of all long life achievements. For these reasons, families and citizens especially the youth and children now pay more attention to education.

Consequently no nation, government, organization or family makes effective impact and lasting successes in their daily affairs without having educated citizens, officers, workers who had clearer understanding of their obligations, functions or responsibilities, observe the laws, apply policies and co-operate in its affairs.

The 6-3-3-4 System of Education established in 1982 was aimed at providing Universal Basic Education for the citizens in order to breed species of individuals with compassion for our great Nation, having National consciousness with the right attitude to life, properties and values required to move national development to the next level.

However, the effort invested by the federal government of Nigeria on education had over the years proven a fruitful and promising reward to national development posing a lively hope for the better in the immediate future. It is of no doubt that several factors have posed relentless restriction to the trend of the rapid development in education; for which truancy in both student and teachers in primary and secondary schools has been a cankerworm to education. This has raised several questions to the quality of education and educational administration in Nigerian Secondary Schools.

According to Huzinga & Thornberry (2000), Truancy is defined as having an unexcused absence from school for one or more part of the day for at least three school days during five-day school week. Moreover, Salford City Counsel Report (2008) defined Truancy as the act when a child, who is believed to have been at school, fails to attend school classes without the permission or awareness of the parents or the school authority concerned. Truancy is an international unauthorized absence from school activities, (<http://www.wikianswer.com>). Echebiwe (2009) defined Truancy as a situation when a child under sixteen years of age who is registered at school fails to attend classes without prior formal permission from the parent or school authority. Therefore, Truancy is the practice of staying away from school without permission. A child who engages in this act is therefore referred to as a Truant. This implies that every child is expected to be in school and must be present in school and class attendance

regularly unless when a child is duly permitted to be absent in respect to health reasons or otherwise stated.

However, children who engage in Truancy might have found life in classrooms dull, boring and uninteresting. Also, they must have found greater pleasure and interest in activities outside the school and the classroom environment. Such children usually leave their homes giving everybody the impression that they have gone to school, but stopped on the way side to participate in what they like to enjoy most. This they do until it is time for school dismissal and they return home. Some others are caught playing round the street with other Truants, engaging in gambling and loitering round the school premises. This is because some Truants get scared of some unfriendly treatment from teachers, unpleasant encounters during classroom work, unnecessary harassment and embarrassment by the senior students. These lead to loss of interest in academics in the classroom by the student.

Beside, some Truants engage in Truancy because of the feeling of inferiority among their classmates, laziness to class work, challenges of classroom test and assignments, verbal abuses and threats of classroom instructors, school phobia, anxiety, bullying, lack of skills needed to perform well at school, lack of priority to education and academics.

Furthermore, the impact of truancy is very obvious and usually a negative one on Truants' present and future life in education. Truancy results in loss of intellectual development and lack of improvement of individual. Also, it leads to poor academic performance at the end of the school periods, school terms and school year. Truancy as a threat to academic performances of the student is believed to reduce the quality of education the child receives. It reduces the standard of academic achievement of a child. It leads to the fall of educational standard in schools. It increases the rate of examination malpractices and poor examination results of both internal and external examinations. Truancy is also a factor that contributes to idealness, joblessness, unemployment and underemployment of most adults today, just because they engaged in the act of Truancy during their school days. Nevertheless, the aim of this work is to investigate the actual acts, causes, and the effects of Truancy in Secondary Schools vis-à-vis its effect on the academic performances of these truants.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For sometime now, the school system has been bedeviled by a number of problems. These problems affect instruction, administration and overall performance of students. It also affects academic performance in both internal and external examinations. Among these problems are truancy, bullying, fighting, rape, fagging, cultism and so on that have affected teaching and learning adversely and made the learning environment no longer interesting to both the teacher and the students.

It is the concern of this work therefore, to look into how truancy among several of these factors has affected the overall performances of students, vis-à-vis student achievements in Aba North Secondary Schools.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Determine whether the acts of truancy exist among Secondary Schools in Aba North.
2. Examine the causes of truancy in Secondary Schools in Aba North.
3. Examine the effects of truancy on academic performances of students in Aba North.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were posited to guide the study:

1. What acts constitutes truancy in secondary schools in Aba North?
2. What factors are responsible for the act of truancy in secondary schools in Aba North?
3. What are the effects of truancy on the academic performances of students in Aba North?

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey method. This is accepted as a scientific tool employable when investigating issues through surveying the opinions, attitudes and perception of people as well as responsible measurement behaviour (Kerlinger, 1973).

All the 250 teachers in 6 secondary schools in Aba North made up the population and sample through the purposive sampling technique. A 2-part, 20-item, 4-point scale instrument titled Truancy and Academic Performance Questionnaire (TAPQ) was used to generate data for answering the three research questions.

The instrument was validated by a team of 4 experts from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, University of Port-Harcourt, Nigeria. These experts looked at the instrument, criticized it and made their inputs. These inputs were built in to make the instrument valid for the research.

Test retest reliability was adopted where 30 respondents who are not part of the sample were chosen. Their responses were generated and after 2 weeks the same instrument was administered to the same respondents. The 2 sets of responses were collated and correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation that yielded an  $r=0.73$ .

The instruments were administered by the researchers who retrieved some on the spot and others on an agreed date. Means were used to answer the research questions.

## Results

### Research Question 1

What Acts Constitute Truancy in Secondary Schools in Aba North?

**Table 1: Acts that Constitutes Truancy**

S/n	Acts that Constitute Truancy	Mean	Decision
1.	Students engage in other activities outside the school.	3.21	A
2.	Students are absent from schools without due permission from school authorities concerned.	3.22	A
3.	Students visit other places of interest from school.	3.06	A
4.	Students come to school regularly but often go home whenever they like .	3.00	A
5.	Students come to school at any time they like within the school hour.	2.62	A

Cluster mean = 3.02

Data in Table 1 shows that students engage in other activities outside school have the mean score of 3.21. Absence from school without permission from authority has the mean score of 3.22. Students visit other places of interest from school has the mean score of 3.06. Students come to school but often go home whenever they like to has the mean score of 3.00. Students come to school at any time they like within the school hours has the mean score of 2.62.

### Research Question 2

What factors are responsible for Truancy in Secondary Schools?

**Table 2: Factors Responsible for the Acts of Students' Truancy in Secondary Schools**

S/n	Factors Responsible for Truancy in Secondary Schools	.Mean	Decision
6.	Long distance from home to school.	2.80	A
7.	Teachers' methods of teaching.	3.18	A
8.	Decline of interest in education by the students.	3.32	A
9.	Unattractive school and classroom environment.	2.25	R
10.	Uninteresting school facilities and equipment.	3.18	A
11.	School fee drive.	2.65	A
12.	Parents' negative attitude towards education	2.93	A
13.	Poor disciplinary measures in homes and schools.	2.62	A
14.	Too much manual labour in schools.	2.45	R

15. Corporal punishment in schools by the senior students. 3.09 A

Cluster mean = 2.85

Data in Table 2 showed that Long distance from home to school had a mean score of 2.80, Teachers' methods of teaching results to the mean score of 3.18. Decline of interest in education by the students had a mean score of 3.32, Lack of interesting school facilities and equipment had a mean score of 3.18, School fee drive came up with the mean score of 2.65, Parents' negative attitude towards education with the mean score of 2.93, Poor disciplinary measures in homes and schools results to the mean score of 2.62 and Corporal punishment in schools by the senior students came up with mean score of 3.09.

However, the factors such as the nature of the school and classroom environment which has the mean score of 2.25 and too much of manual labour in schools with the mean score of 2.45 were rejected..

### **Research Question 3**

What are the Effects of Truancy on the Academic Performance of Students in Secondary Schools?

**Table 3: The Effects of Truancy on Academic Performances of Students**

<b>S/n</b>	<b>The Effects of Students' Truancy in Schools</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Decision</b>
16.	Truancy in Secondary school reduces the quality of Secondary School Education.	3.27	A
17.	Truancy results in poor Academic Performances at the end year school examinations.	2.76	A
18.	Truancy affects the students' future status after their school days.	2.88	A
19.	Truancy in secondary schools leads to the production of unqualified graduates and school drop-outs.	2.88	A
20.	Truancy reduces academic performance of students.	2.59	A

Cluster mean = 2.87

The above analysis showed that the effect of student truancy on their academic performance is usually a negative one which has a cluster mean of 2.87. Some of these effects as analyzed in the table are: Reduction in the quality of education had a mean score of 2.76; poor academic results of examination which had the mean score of 2.88, having half baked graduates and large number of school drop-outs with the mean score

2.88, while the effect on the general life style in future and in their adulthood after school days had the mean score of 2.59.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Results in table 1, items 1 and 3 indicated that students go to school and engage in other activities outside the school. Secondly, they go to school but visit other places of interest. These agree with the findings of Akano (2011), Okoro (2004) who explained that some students are compelled to divert to join other friends who are not ready to be in school because of pleasure of the fun they obtain from being absent.

Data in table 2, items 3 showed that teachers method of teaching, unattractive school and classroom environment and parental negative attitude account for truancy in school. These agree with the work of Ekeke (1980) who reiterated that the recruitment of unqualified teachers and lack of teacher enthusiasm are capable of causing truancy in school. Amplifying this further, Adelaye (1981) noted that most teachers lack the right attitude to teaching and hence their classroom conducts are at variance with the expectations of students causing truancy and other deviant behaviours.

Additionally, parent's negative attitude towards education can lead their children to truancy. This has an overwhelming support of Morris, Ebre and Lengz (1991) who maintained that lack of support to the education of children cause truancy.

Result indicates that truancy gives rise to poor academic performance in both internal and external examinations. This supports the work of Bright (2007) who observed that when students fail to take enough lessons due to truancy, it makes them perform poorly in examinations.

### **Conclusion**

From the results of the study, the following conclusions were made: Truancy exists in secondary schools in Aba North. Acts of truancy in our schools include: Absence from school without permission, coming to school at will by the students. Absenting themselves without due permission from the school authorities among others.

The major factors responsible for truancy include: long distance from school, teachers methodology, too much manual labour and corporal punishment.

The major consequences of truancy in schools are: increase in drop-out syndrome, poor academic performances in both internal and external examinations, half baked graduans and so on.

### **Summary of Findings**

Acts of truancy include:

1. Absenteeism from school without permission.

2. Present in school but absent in class.
3. Present in classroom but leaves at anytime of choice.
4. Students come to school anytime they want.

**Factors Responsible for Truancy Include:**

5. Long distance from home.
6. Teachers' methods of teaching.
7. Loss of interest in academics.
8. Lack of school equipment and facilities.
9. School fees drive and negative attitude of parents to education.
10. Poor disciplinary measures from home and corporal punishment from senior students.
11. The nature of school environment.

**Effects of Truancy Include:**

12. Increase in drop out rate.
13. Poor academic performance leads to the production of half baked graduans.

**Recommendations**

Based on the results, the following recommendations were made:

1. The authorities should provide meaningful activities to engage the students throughout their stay in school. This will help reduce visits outside the school.
2. The school authorities should as much as possible provide places, equipments and facilities of interest in the school to keep their students.
3. The school and classroom environment should be made very attractive through the provision of flowers, paintings and games equipment to promote sustained interest in the school.
4. Parents should develop positive attitudes towards education and this has to be inculcated into their children to promote continued stay in school.
5. Too much manual labour and corporal punishment should be mitigated to discourage apathy to schooling and school activities.

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