

Selected Measures for Curbing Truancy among Secondary School Students in Ebonyi State Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines the selected measures for curbing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state. Four research questions guided the study and descriptive survey research design was employed. The population comprised of 4423 teachers in 221 secondary schools in the area. Simply random sampling was used to select 108 teachers from nine selected secondary schools. A 20-item research made questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument received face validation and was subjected to reliability test using t-test. This was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha Correlation Coefficient and it yielded coefficient of 0.79. Mean score were to analyze the data collected. The findings revealed that parents involvement in truancy prevention activities, on-going truancy prevention programmes, role of school prefect and government activities serve as adequate measure for reducing truancy among students in secondary school. Finally the paper recommended among others that parent should be mandated by school authorities to provide their children with basic school needs.

KEY WORDS: Selected Measures, Truancy, Secondary School Students, Ebonyi State

INTRODUCTION

School education has been noticed to be one of the basic steps needed to make an individual a functional member of the society in which he/she belongs to. In order to achieve academies excellence' the students are expected to attend school daily, but due to some factors (which this work will unravel) most students absent themselves from formal school activities without due permission (Anibogu, 2004).

Historically, the origin of truancy can be traced to the Massachusetts compulsory Education Act of 1647 and its subsequent school attendance Act of 1852, which breed parents to send their children for at least 12 weeks in a term (Michael, 2005). To this Act, every school is by law required to notify any student who acquires five unexcused absence within a school year with a letter of misconduct.

However, it is through this unexcused absence from school without legitimate or legal knowledge of parents, guardian or the school that truancy among students came into play. Truancy exists among students of secondary school and other levels of education. It seems now a phenomenon that has come to stay in our schools and institutions of higher learning such as colleges of Educatin, Polytechnics and Universities. In the context of a school system, Anibogu (2004) writes that truancy is the act of absenting oneself from classes or school functions. This could be in form of late attendance to schools and classes, resuming some days or even weeks after the beginning of each term and without any good reasons or permission as well as occasioned abscondment from school programmes and lessons. However, truancy is more rampant in our secondary schools where the students are in their transitional stage. Mostly during the period of adolescence when children exhibited some undesirable behaviours, especially, when they want to be noticed and create air of freedom around them. In order words, a student is said to be a truant if he/she does not conform to the predetermined rules and regulations regarding regular attendances to school. A truant could be a student who runs away from school, to roam about the streets and later returns home at the end of the day without achieving any goal.

Truancy on academic in secondary school is a situation in which students develop and show adverse attitude and behavior to learning. They absent themselves from classes using unnecessary excuses such as in genuine sickness, fake suspension by the class teacher or school authority and involvement in sport activities. Truancy can equally occur in a boring and boredom classes. This happens with harsh teachers who are difficult to approach and in an unconducive school environment (Osarenren, 1999) that scare students from attending classes.

Nwangwu (1989) is of the view that the family is the first window of the child to the world, and should tend to nurture the child and stop his deviating from the vital social roles. Most parents neglect their basic roles and this tells much on the students' attendance to school. They tend to shift their responsibilities to the school, forgetting that the school can not achieve success if parents have not played their role very well.

The teachers have not helped matters either, in that they are responsible for the abuse of time by the students (Igbo, 2006). This happens when students are not fully occupied and yet the scheme of work is not covered. Hence, one or two subjects are taught in a day because, the teachers run out at times attend to other business at the expense of his/her teaching job. This may be because of government's inability to pay salaries and other incentives. Some teachers enter the classroom for an unprepared lesson, making the whole lesson boring. Some of them are chief truants in their acts. This is against the rules and regulations of the schools. The government neglect their own duty in refusing to pay teachers as at when due. They are not concerned about how to better the education of their citizens. Again, students are not in most cases given time to exercise themselves like get together and other recreational activities. Tyerman (2005) observed that most of them were not allowed to engage in some activities like debate and quiz competition because of the fact that they may not do well it selected. On the other hand, some students are not ready to learn; rather most of them prefer roaming about the street with their peers. This has actually posed a threat in the society today. Observation has shown that most students are seen along the streets during school hours, in markets and drinking places engaging in gambling to mention but a few. The females on the other hand, prefer mainly to make themselves up with less attention given to their education. They engage in examination malpractices all in a bid to pass at all costs. The teachers point at the parents, the parents point to the school and the schools points at the law and the authority and it goes on that way. But the fact is that each group may be responsible and contributes to the problem of truancy among secondary school students in one way or the other. It is highly frustrating to the teachers, parents, the society and the child himself to realize the consequences when it is already late and as a result, the goal of a well planned education curriculum is defeated. Considering the above assertion, it became necessary to look into the adequate measures to be adopted in reducing truancy in secondary schools. Government has strategize so many ways to be used in curbing truancy, but the observations from our schools show that attention of the researchers in education to carry out an investigation on adequate ways to be followed in curbing truancy in our schools.

Statement of the Problem

The objective of secondary school education in Nigeria is not only to provide students with academic and vocational skills but also to make them to be moral conscious in their mode of ... it is quite unfortunate that these objectives have not been fully achieved due to the high level of students' involvement in some undesirable behaviours. In most cases it is assured that teachers, government and parents constitute students engagement in these undesirable behaviours due to negligence of role expected of them to perform such includes: providing basic needs of students' by parents, improving teachers' condition of service by government and nonchalant attitude of some teachers which has adversely affected the students' academic performance in secondary schools.

The existence of truancy among secondary school students is an educational problem that needs to be solved by all parties involved. It is quite a common sight to see students along the streets loitering around the school premises during the school hours. The problem associated with this type of behavior cannot be overemphasized. Truancy poses a serious threat to education process; it raises problems for discipline and the administration of schools. These may be linked to teachers and principal's oversight in involving all the students to participation in most of curriculum and co-curricula activities that will motivate their interest in school activities. The present study therefore seeks to determine some selected measures for curbing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the some selected ways for curbing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Examine whether involvement of parents in all truancy preventive activities reduces truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state.
- ii. Examine if student involvement in on- going truancy prevention programme in school helps in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state.
- iii. Examine if roles of school prefect help in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state.
- iv. Determine if government activities help in reducing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state.

Research Questions

To guide this research, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How does involvement of parents in all truancy preventive activities serve as adequate strategies for reducing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state?
2. How does students involvement in on- going truancy prevention programme in school curbs truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state?
3. How do roles of school prefect help in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state?
4. How do government activities help in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state?

Methods

The study employed descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Ebonyi State. The population of the study comprised of 4423 teachers in 221 secondary schools in the area. Simple random sampling procedure was used to select 108 teachers from 9 secondary schools selected in the area. Self structured questionnaire titled “selected measure for combing truancy among secondary school students questionnaire”. The instrument received face validation from 2 experts in Educational Administration and an expert in Measurement and Evaluation. More so, the instrument was pilot tested through test-retest method. This was done using 30 teachers in secondary schools in Enugu State to trail test the instrument. The results of the tests were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha procedure. Data were collected personally by the researcher and were analyzed using mean scores. Data Presentation: Data were analyzed and presented based on the research questions that guided the study.

Research Question 1

How does involvement of parents in all truancy prevention activities serves as adequate measure for reducing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state?

Table 1: Mean responses of the respondents on how Parents involvement in all Truancy Prevention Activities, enhance the reduction of truancy among students.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	EFX	X	DEC
1	Parents' development of interest in knowing their children problems.	48	35	13	12	108	335	3.10	Agree
2	Family friendly relationship helps in reducing truancy among secondary school students.	30	25	32	21	08	280	2.59	Agree
3	Parents discussing students' behavior with teachers can help to reduce truancy among secondary school students.	50	44	14	-	108	360	3.33	Agree
4	Providing basic needs of student by parents can help reduces truancy among secondary students.	58	38	12	-	108	370	3.43	Agree
5	Parental involvement in early truancy of students for school can help reduce truancy among secondary school students.	38	42	15	13	108	321	2.97	Agree

Average Grand mean (x) = 3.08

The above table shows that all the five items have positive responses, the Mean responses are above the criterion Mean of 2.50. This implies parents' involvement in all truancy prevention activities can be used as adequate measure in reducing truancy among secondary school students. While item number four has the highest mean (x) score of 3.43, followed by item three with a mean (x) score of 3.33; also item number five with a mean (x) score of 2.97 and finally item I has a mean (x) score of 3.10 in all, research question 1 recorded average grand mean of 3.08 which shows that it is accepted that parents involvement in all truancy prevention activities can help in curbing truancy among secondary school students.

Research Questions 2

How does teachers' involvement in on-going prevention programme in schools help in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Ishielu Local Government Area?

Table 2: Mean responses of the respondents on how On-going truancy prevention programme as a measure help in curbing truancy among secondary school students

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	EFX	X	DEC
6	Truancy can be reduced if on-going programme is implemented.	35	38	20	15	108	329	3.05	Agree
7	Student's basic educational needs by government can reduce truancy among secondary school students.	45	31	14	13	08	314	2.91	Agree
8	Provision of school bus will help reduce truancy among secondary school students.	45	33	17	13	108	326	3.02	Agree
9	Firm sanctions for truants students can reduce truancy.	15	25		28	108	243	2.25	Disagree
10	Improving teachers' welfare service can aid to reduce truancy among secondary school students.	30	33		20	108	289	2.68	Agree

Average grand mean (x) 2.78

The above table shows that four items have positive responses of their Mean being above criterion mean of 2.50. This means that mean that on-going truancy prevention programmes serves as a correct measure for reducing truancy among secondary school students. While item number six has the highest mean (x) score of 3.05 followed by item seven with a mean (x) score of 2.91; as well as item number eight with a mean (x) score of 3.02; also item number 9 with a mean (x) score of 2.25 and finally item 10 has a mean (scores of 2.75 In all, research question 2 recorded average grand mean of 2.78 which shows that it is accepted that on- going truancy prevention programme serve as a strategy for reducing truancy among secondary school students.

Research Question 3:

How do roles of prefects help in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state.

Table 3: School prefect's role in curbing truancy among secondary school students as observed by the respondents.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	EFX	X	DEC
11	Truancy can be minimized if prefects duly report truant students to the school authority.	43	35	17	13	108	324	3.00	Agree
12	Discontinuing association with truant students can reduce truancy among secondary school students.	21	12	50	25	08	245	2.27	Disagree
13	Punishing truant students caught by the school prefects can reduce truancy.	48	33	15	12	108	333	3.08	Agree
14	Prefects involving in decision making of the school help to reduce truancy.	55	40	26	-	108	392	3.63	Agree
15	Prefects checkmating the punctuality of students help to reduce truancy.	25	15	35	33	108	248	2.3	Disagree

Average grand mean (x) = 2.86

In this table, the item, 11 13 and 14 have a mean (x) scores of 3.00, 3.08 and 3.63 respectively, showing that the respondents agree to those items as a way of reducing truancy among secondary school students. While item number 12 and 15 have mean (x) score of 2.27 and 2.30 respectively. This implies that the respondents disagree with only two items.

Therefore, from the above table, it can be seen that cool prefect role serves as a strategy for reducing truancy among secondary school students, since the grand mean is 2.86 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50.

Research Question 4

How do government activities help in curbing truancy among secondary school students?

Table 4: Mean rating of the respondents on how government Activities as a strategy for curbing truancy among secondary school students.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	EFX	X	DEC
16	Provision of monitoring teams during school Hours.	35	38	20	15	108	309	2.80	Agree
17	Provision of academic facilities like library, laboratory and technical workshop.	50	28	19	11	08	333	2.99	Agree
18	Compulsory boardingschools can help to reduce truancy among secondary school students.	35	33	20	20	108	299	2.77	Agree
19	Provision of recreational facilities to schools will aid in reducing truancy among secondary school students.	40	33	17	18	108	311	2.88	Agree
20	Improving teacher's condition of service can aid to reduce truancy among secondary school students.	47	38	10	13	108	335	3.10	Agree
Average grand mean (x) = 2.93									

The analysis of the table 4 revealed that the five items have a very high positive responses that there is need for the government to improve among others conditions of services to teachers in order reduce truancy among secondary school students. The item 20 ranks highest with 3. 10, followed by item number seventeen (17) with 3.08. Item number nineteen has a mean (x) score of 2.88. Item number of eighteen (18) has a mean (x) scores of 2.77 which are all accepted. In all, it recorded an average mean of 2.93 which shows that it is accepted.

Therefore, from the above analysis it can be seen that government play a great role in reducing truancy among secondary school students. Hence, should improve on their roles if truancy is to be curbed.

Discussion of the Findings

In the process of the study in chapter four, research question 1, it shows that parents' involvement in all prevention activities can be used as strategies to reduce truancy among secondary school students. Item number four has the highest mean (x) scores of 3.43 followed by item three with a mean (x) score of 3.33; also item number five with a mean (x) score of 2.29 and finally item 1 has mean (x) score of 3.10. In all, research question 1 recorded average grand mean of 3.08 which shows that it is accepted that parents involvement in all truancy prevention activities serves as a strategy for curbing truancy among secondary school students. This finding is in line with the view of Dubbey, Elemao and Thakur (1997) that most children in Nigeria do not enter school until they are six or seven years. during this time they stay with their parents and other relatives. Their behaviours and attitudes will start to be patterned by the time they enter school. How the child responds lo school is highly dependent on their attitudes and behaviour. In most cases, students are not serious with their academic work based on the way their parents handled them at home. Based on these, they suggested that there are two level of truancy namely: family motivated truancy and students motivated truancy.

In research question 2, which state that on-going truancy prevention programme can be used as strategies to reduce truancy among secondary school student. In the table 2, it was revealed that four items have positive responses above the criterion mean, that is, on-going truancy prevention programmes can be used as strategies to reduce truancy among secondary school students. While item number eight has the highest mean (X) score of 3.02, following by item seven with a mean (x) score 2.91; also item number 6 with mean (x) scores of 3.05; also item number 9 with a mean (x) score 2.25 and finally item 10 has a mean (x) score of 2.68. In all, research question 2 recorded average grand mean of 2.78 which means accepted that on-going truancy prevention programme can help to reduce truancy among secondary school students. In the view of (Michael, 2005), it was discussed that in order to enforce regular school

attendance policies, school officials should establish close linkage with law enforcement agents like police, probation officer, Juvenile and family court official's etc. to help prosecute any student caught playing truancy.

In research question 3, which states that truancy among secondary school students could be reduced through the roles of school prefects. These findings confirm the finding of Abosi (1999) when he says that students should be very careful about their choice of friends. These good choices of friends are more of facilitators or school prefects they should endeavour to provide information that will help broaden their knowledge on the consequence of truancy definitely it will go a long way in curbing truancy among students.

In research question 4, it was discovered that government has a great roles to play in reducing truancy among secondary school students. This discovery agree with Igbo (2006) when he says that if teachers' conditions of service are improved, it will then encourage teachers to help in reducing truancy in schools. Anigbogu (2004) held also that government should endeavour to rectify certain problems in the teaching profession. Fund should be made available to provide essential teaching equipment as well as adequately for the needs of the teachers through the community, for efficiency and productivity to be maintained.

Recommendations

In views of the findings so far, the research makes the followings recommendations.

1. Teachers should see themselves as role model and as well see teaching as their professional career by so doing, their negative attitudes towards teaching and students truancy behavior be reduced if not eliminated.
2. Parents should be mandated by school authorities to provide their children with basic school needs, as this will reduce unnecessary outing among secondary school students.
3. Government should make sure that the condition of services of teachers are adequately provided in order to enhance teachers morale and as well provide educational needs such as conducive teaching and learning environment, adequate instructional materials and other academic facilities like library, laboratory and technical workshop. This in no doubt will help reduce truancy among the secondary school students.
4. Government should help the police department to establish and run temporary detention centres where they can detain students found playing truant, also the government in conjunction with the police should as well embark on some other anti- truancy initiative like operation sweep truancy students in the neighborhood. By so doing truant students and potential ones will be afraid of engaging in truancy.
5. School authorities should reinforce her mode of enforcing school rules and regulations as this will go a long way to reduce students' misbehaviours in school.

Conclusions

The study investigated some strategies for curbing truancy among secondary school students in Ebonyi state. The study found among others that parents, school prefects and government can help in reducing truancy among students.

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