

# Absenteeism and Truancy on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Ogun State, Nigeria

Musa, Titilayo M.

Department of Educational Foundations and Management  
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria  
E-mail: [titilayo1423@yahoo.com](mailto:titilayo1423@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

The study investigated absenteeism and truancy and their impact on the academic performance of secondary school students in Ogun State. A survey research design was employed and two hypotheses were generated and tested in the study. Respondent were two hundred SSS2 students that were randomly selected from five selected secondary schools. They responded to Non-School Attendance Assessment Scale that was used for data collection for the study. Data were analyzed using simple percentages and weighted mean, and all the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that peer group factors, socio economic background of the students, poor academic performance of students, are contributory factors to absenteeism and truancy in our secondary schools. It was suggested that, parents should guide their children and be of good models, also they should pay serious attention to financial and material needs of their children.

**Keywords:** Absenteeism, Truancy, Academic Performance, Peer group, Student

## Introduction

Problems affecting students' academic performance in Nigeria include absenteeism and truancy. These are behaviours that students exhibited that deviate from the social norms of the school. It has caused serious problems to the smooth running of the school system, the progress of the students and also the overall education programme. There are a lot of effects of truancy and absenteeism on a child and society in general. Absenteeism and truancy may lead a child to become hardened criminal in future life, if not curbed (Abayomi, 2002). When a child tends to get involved in acts such as running away from school, he may not have time to concentrate on his/her studies, whereby having negative impact on the academic performance of such a child. This will make such a child neglect his intended goals and if this happens, such a child will not be able to concentrate on his/her education and his/her career will come into a stand still. In a situation where a child is always playing the truancy, such a child will be missing a lot of lessons and definitely will not know anything being taught by the teacher. As a result, such a child will never achieve any goal in his/her education and career.

## Truancy and Absenteeism

Education is the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the community and a good citizen (Ferranti, 1993). The school has been established as the agent of the society to mould the habits, interest, attitudes and feelings of children and transmit the societal norms, culture, values and traditions from one generation to another. The school as an institution is a place of learning morality and inculcate discipline to the students. Despite this, some students still do not attend classes. Students' absence from school for unexcused reasons is referred to as truancy.

However, the situation in our secondary schools regarding the issue of absenteeism and truancy is pathetic. Absenteeism and truancy are presently major problems facing our schools, and the damaging effects to students' academic performances have largely been overlooked. Adeyemo (1998) sees a truant as "A child who often stays away from school without any good reason. Absenteeism is regular persistent absence from work or school while truancy is an act of or practice of deliberately staying away from school without any acceptance reason, whether or not the parents or guardians know and approve of it (Fugleman & Richardson, 2001). A truant is a child that does not go to school thereby diverting to somewhere else or wandering around (Sayeler, 1997). A truant leaves home but does not reach school, he escapes from school or class to engage in any other activities that catch up his imaginations (Gabb, 1997). Gullatt and Lemoine (1997) also opined that truancy is avoidance behaviour towards school as a result of the existence of other reinforcing activities outside the school, other than the home. Rothman (2001) opined that "truancy is an act of staying away from school without leave". Truancy is a problem because the absent students cannot benefit from the various programmes that the school offers. Effects of truancy include lower academic achievements (Baker & Jansen, 2000) and criminal activities (Garry, 2001).

Truancy and absenteeism are signs of maladjustment that require psychologically treatment (Green, 2001). It is an act of indiscipline and this has been causing misunderstanding among adolescence, teachers, parents and in the society (Abayomi, 2002). Truants increase their risk for dropping out of school and high school dropouts are more likely to be unemployed or end up in prison than students who graduate from high school or college. There are four categories of truants; students being in school but absent in class, students neither in classroom nor in

the school but at home, those neither in the school nor at home, and those who absent themselves from classes as a result of the difficulty in the school subjects or dislike for the subject or teacher (Owodunni, 1996).

Stoll (1993) submitted that factors responsible for pupils' truancy are many and varied. Lansdown (1990) viewed that there is no point in seeking single factor explanation for a complex phenomenon like truancy. Factors influencing truancy fall into four broad categories; child/ personality, family, school, and society/ community (Rohrman, 1993; Kinder, Harland, Wilkin & Wakefield, 1995). Osarenren (1996) also discussed the causes of truancy among school children under factors resident in the home, school environment, peer-group, culture, and society. In the same vein, Gesinde (2005) has also identified the contributory role of government in truancy behaviour among school children. Lack of interest in education of children varies and this depends on the child. If a child is not interested in education and in such a situation, a child who is not interested in education if forced to do would always show truancy and absenteeism he/she would not go to school always as expected, many other things that can also influence the interest of a child in education. A pupil may be ill or sick and may be kept at home in good faith until the child is well and be able to move about freely without any problem (Harrison, 1994).

### **Peer Group Factor and Truancy**

Though, many scholars (Rothman, 2001; Galloway, 1985; Gabb, 1997; Oerlemans & Jenkins, 1998) have blamed the child for truancy behaviour, the peer influence had been identified as a major factor influencing a child's truancy behaviour. According to Omoegun (1995), a child would rather prefer to spend most of his days in the midst of his peers where he would be happier and more relaxed. And this gives room for undue peer influence particularly in antisocial behaviours like truancy. Owodunni (1996) opined that it is easier for student to yield to the pressure from their colleagues than to obey the teacher and the school authority. Rohrman (1993) opined that peers have an invaluable and influential role to play in providing both the support and context necessary for the learning of new skills and that they act as reinforcing agents of socialization. In a study conducted by Osarenren (1996) reported that regardless of whether children's attitudes and conducts were approved by parents or other adults, adolescents attempt to model his behaviour according to what represents the standard of his peer group. Adebisi, (1996) gives a critical analytical influence of peer group as a strong factor that causes truancy and absenteeism. The type of friends a student keeps plays an important role. For example student from well behave homes may become truant or absence from school as a result of mixing with bad students who are not discipline at home.

### **Absenteeism and Truancy on Students' Academic Performance**

There are different views on the possible effects of truancy and absenteeism on students' academic performance in our schools. Oyebanji (1997) agreed that any child who stays away from school will miss so many lessons that he will as a result fall behind other children in the class. She also stressed that the impact on each individual concerned and their academic performance should be viewed as a very serious matter of concerned to parents. 'Truancy and absenteeism can 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 frustrated.

Owen (2001) says that truancy and absenteeism may lead a child into drug addiction, and in most cases student that absent from school, his or her Intelligent Quotient (IQ) would be going retarded and such students would score below average in his class work because he missed all the normal school lessons and all the academic school training which he is suppose to have acquired. He would also associate with bad group that push him anyhow. Anything they do he will also do without having any second thought over it and this will eventually lure him/her into criminal activities such as stealing, smoking, cultism, narcotics etc. all these will increase his confidence in his bad behaviour which eventually have bad impact on his academic success, his brain will be affected and his way of thinking will all be in negative form.

### **Home Factor and Truancy**

The home is a powerful determinant factor in the behaviour of children. Adedipe (1998) opined that children who are not adequately monitored by their parents may show a variety of unhealthy symptoms in behaviours. Adebisi (1996) opines broken homes as a factor that causes truancy and absenteeism in children because in most broken home there is no proper care for the child. Eisenbory (1998) views truancy as the fear of being away from parents.

These delinquent youths ran away from home, and pose threats to the future development of a nation. According to Erickson and Curl (1996), some of the parents show no interest in their children development in terms of academic support and others. Therefore in most cases a child turn truant because parent do not show any interest in their academic performance at a particular stage such a child may be easily lure into truancy. School age children and teens who are unsupervised during the hours of school are far more likely to use alcohol, drugs and tobacco, engage in acts of criminality and other high risk behaviours, receive poor grades, and drop from school

than those children who have the opportunity to benefit in constructive activities and supervised by responsible parents and adults (Harrison, 1994).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The school has been established as the agent of the society to mould the habits, interest, attitudes and feelings of children and transmit the societal norms, culture, values and traditions from one generation to another. Despite this, some students still do not attend school classes. Many of our youths now run away from schools while in many of the cases, the parents believe they are attending school classes. While they are away from school, they exercise freedom in engaging in a lot of juvenile delinquencies like fighting and drug abuse. This situation in our schools is highly worrisome. Truancy is a problem because the absent students cannot benefit from the various programmes that the school offers. Effects of truancy have been reported to include lower academic achievements, delinquent and criminal activities. It has been established that absenteeism and truancy are cogs in the wheel of teaching learning.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The research tested the following non-directional hypotheses at 0.5 level of significance:

- 1) Peer group will not significantly contribute to the act of truancy and absenteeism in our secondary school.
- 2.) There is no significant impact of absenteeism and truancy on the academic performance of student in Ogun state, Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

A descriptive survey sample design was adopted for this research. This study examined the effects of truancy, absenteeism and their impact on academic performance of secondary school students.

#### **Population, Sample and Sampling Technique**

The targeted population for this study consisted of all the secondary school students in Ogun State of Nigeria. There are twenty one secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. A representative fraction of the students was randomly selected. In selection of the sample, the simple random sampling method was adopted. Five (5) secondary schools were randomly selected, and forty S.S.2 students were randomly selected from each of the schools as respondents (a total sample of two hundred students in all).

#### **Research Instrument**

Non-School Attendance Assessment Scale (NAAS), an instrument designed by the researcher was used to collect data. The Scale was divided into four sections; sections A explored the personal data of respondents, section B contained items on peer group, section C contained items on socio-economic background, section D contained items on their effects on students' academic performance and section E contained items on solutions. Items were rated on Likert scale of four options: SA strongly agree, (A) agree, (D) disagree, (SD) strongly disagree.

The validity of the Scale was based on the content validity to ensure that they measures what they are expected to measure. Items on this scale were gotten through literature. The researcher then critically reviewed and modified them for stability and ensured that they were capable of eliciting the expected responses. After the first draft, the questionnaires were given to colleagues for modification.

### **Results**

The results are presented in tables 1 and 2:

**Hypothesis One:** Peer group will not significantly contribute to the act of truancy and absenteeism in our secondary school.

**Table 1:** Frequency count, percentages, mean standard deviation and chi- square of peer group contribution to the act of truancy and absenteeism in our secondary schools.

SN	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mn	SD	x <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
1	The type of peer group a student keeps plays a significant role in the act of absenteeism and truancy in school.	15 (7.5%)	14 (7.0%)	53 (26.6%)	117 (58.8%)	3.37	0.91	141.1	.000
2	Students from well behaved homes become truant as a result of bad friends.	9 (4.5%)	23 (11.6%)	99 (49.7%)	68 (34.2%)	3.14	0.79	103.2	.000
3	Broken home lead a student to join bad group.	23 (11.6%)	27 (13.6%)	59 (29.6%)	90 (45.2%)	3.09	1.02	59.1	.000
4	Some students absent themselves from school due to the effect of the peer-groups.	64 (32.2%)	26 (13.1%)	58 (29.1%)	51 (25.6%)	2.48	1.19	16.8	.001
5	Peer-group influence can lead a student to some bad habits e.g. smoking, cultism, stealing etc	9 (4.5%)	30 (15.1%)	65 (32.7%)	95 (47.7%)	3.24	0.87	87.1	.000

Results in Table 1 above revealed that a greater percentage of the respondents agreed with the statement that the type of peer-group a student keeps play a significant role in the act of absenteeism and truancy in school and this will affect their academic performance (Mean = 3.37; SD .91; x<sup>2</sup>= 141.08; p < .05.) Also, most of the respondents established that students from well behaved homes become truant as a result of bad friends (Mean = 3.14; SD= .79; x<sup>2</sup>= 103.21; p < .05). In addition, majority of the respondents also agreed with the statement that broken home lead a student to join bad group (Mean = 3.09; SD = 1.02; x<sup>2</sup>= 59.07; p < .05) The respondents have divided opinion on the statement that some students absent themselves from school due to the effect of the peer-groups (Mean = 2.48; SD = 1.19; x<sup>2</sup> =16.82; p <.05). However, most of the respondents agreed with the statement that peer-group influence can lead a student to some bad habits for example smoking, cultism, stealing etc. (Mean = 3.24; SD = .87; x<sup>2</sup> = 87.05; p< .05) Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that peer group, will not significantly contribute to the act of truancy and absenteeism in our secondary school s by the findings of this study was rejected.

**Table 2:** Frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation and chi-square values of impact absenteeism and truancy on the academic performance of students in Ogun State.

		SD	D	A	SA	Mean	SD	x <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
1	Students' poor performance in academic is as a result of absenteeism and truancy	24 (12.1%)	41 (20.6%)	48 (24.1%)	86 (43.2%)	2.98	1.06	41.34	.000
2	Continuous repetition of the same class by student can be as a result of absenteeism and truancy	14 (7.0%)	69 (34.7%)	70 (35.2%)	46 (23.1%)	2.74	.89	41.66	.000
3	Bad habits such as stealing, smoking, cultism, these bad habit can have impact on academic performance of any student.	12 (6.6%)	82 (41.2%)	49 (24.6%)	56 (28.1%)	2.75	.94	50.35	.000
4	Absenteeism and truancy lead to student poor academic performance in the school.	17 (8.5%)	61 (30.7%)	61 (30.7%)	60 (30.2%)	2.82	.96	28.76	.000
5	Unseriousness with academic work can make student to repeat classes, which can lead to truancy and absenteeism in the school.	13 (6.5%)	25 (12.6%)	62 (31.2%)	99 (49.7%)	3.24	.91	91.23	.000

Table 2 above indicated that most of the respondents agreed with the statement that students poor performance in academic is as a result of absenteeism and truancy (Mean = 2.98; SD = 1.06; x<sup>2</sup> =41.34; p <.05). In addition,

majority of the respondent agreed that continuous repetition of the same class by students can be as a result of absenteeism and truancy (Mean = 2.74; SD = .89;  $\chi^2 = 41.66$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that student with criminal or bad habit such as stealing, smoking, cultism, these bad habit can have impact on academic performance of any students (Mean = 2.75; SD = .94;  $\chi^2 = 50.35$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Also, most of the respondents agreed with the statement that absenteeism and truancy lead to student poor academic performance in the school (Mean = 2.82; SD = .96;  $\chi^2 = 28.76$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Majority of the respondents also agreed that lack of seriousness with academic work can make student to repeat classes, which can lead to truancy and absenteeism in the school (Mean = 3.24; SD = .91;  $\chi^2 = 91.23$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant impact of absenteeism and truancy on the academic performance of students in Ogun State, was by the finding of this study rejected. Hence, absenteeism and truancy has a negative on student's academic performance.

### Discussion of Findings

The result of hypothesis one revealed that peer group will significantly contribute to the act of truancy and absenteeism in our secondary school. This result is line with the assertion of Omoegun (1995) that a child would rather prefer to spend most of his days in the midst of his peers where he would be happier and more relaxed. Also, Owodunni (1996) opined that it is easier for student to yield to the pressure from their colleagues than to obey the teacher and the school authority. This result also lend credence to findings of Rohrman (1993) who reported that peers have an invaluable and influential role to play in providing both the support and context necessary for absenteeism and truancy. In a similar study, Osarenren (1996) reported that regardless of whether children's attitudes and conducts were approved by parents or other adults, adolescents attempt to model his behaviour according to what represents the standard of his peer group. Adebisi (1996) opined peer group as a strong factor towards truancy and absenteeism. The type of friends a student keeps plays an important role. Adebisi (1996) gives a critical analytical influence of peer group as strong factor that cause truancy and absenteeism. He also gives broken homes as another factor that cause truancy and absenteeism in children because most broken homes lack proper care for the child.

Outcome of hypothesis two showed that there is a significant impact of absenteeism and truancy on the academic performance of student in Ogun State. This result is supported the findings of Baker and Jansen (2000) that the effects of truancy include lower academic achievements. Oyebanji (1997) also agreed that any child who stays away from school will miss so many lessons that he will as a result fall behind the other children in the class. She also stressed that the impact on each individuals concerned and their academic performance should be viewed as a very serious matter of concerned to parents. Isyaku (2002) reported lacks of teaching among the factors that contribute to acts of truancy and absenteeism in school.

### Conclusion

Based on the major findings of this study, it can be concluded that:

1. Peer group will significantly contribute to the act of truancy and absenteeism in our secondary schools.
2. There is a significant impact of absenteeism and truancy on the academic performance of students in Ogun State, Nigeria.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study. A conscious implementation of these recommendations will go a long ways in the improvement on the cases of truancy and absenteeism in our secondary schools

- Parents should guide their children into the right path and they be good models to their children.
- Parents should pay serious attention to the financial needs of their children and provide their school materials
- Parents should be interested in the peer group or friends their child move with or keep and watch their activities with keen interest.
- Parents, teacher and the school principals should endeavour to be steadfast and be concerned with the task of making students to be responsible and discipline right from the youth, so that the nations expectation on them as future leaders may be attained.

### Conclusion

One of the problems that affect the academic performance of students in secondary school system today in Nigeria is t Absenteeism and Truancy. From the study, effort had been made to know the extent and how it affects the students viewing truancy and absenteeism in relation to academic performance, it can be seen that the two constitute a great significant effect on the future life of the student absentees and truants. In conclusion, the impacts of absenteeism and truancy on academic performance of secondary school students are as follows:

- Lack of seriousness on the part of the students; Poor school and academic performances; Students becoming problematic teachers in the school as well as his parents at home; The habitual absentee child will miss a lot of class work and may become drop-out; Absenteeism and Truancy may jeopardise the future of the student and consequently his contributions to life and national development; The society will have a lot of people that are socially misfits since most of these absentees and truants will serve no useful ways in the society.

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