

## Influence of Socio-economic Status on Truancy among Secondary School Students

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**KEYWORDS** Causes of Absenteeism. Socio-economic Status. Truancy

**ABSTRACT** This study examines the influence of socio-economic status on truancy among secondary school students in Nigeria. The aim of this article is, through a review of literature methodology, to investigate the extent to which the influence of socio-economic status on truancy among secondary school students in Nigeria could be reduced. The findings show that students that came from moderate family socio-economic background stayed at school more than the less privileged students who came from low family socio-economic background. In view of the above points, it is recommended that for vast punctuality of students to be adequately maintained within secondary schools in Nigeria, government should provide the necessary learning materials, conducive environment, sufficient and qualified teachers for effective teaching. In addition, the government should establish the monitoring and evaluating team to visit various schools and assess both teachers and students promptness. The study also recommends that all teachers should create positive interest among their students and encourage them to always show more interest on the school extra-curriculum activities or classroom activities in order to stay in the school. Parents should visits their children at schools for at least once or twice in a month and the students in question should be willing to learn at any point in time.

### INTRODUCTION

Influence of socio-economic status on truancy among the secondary school adolescents in Nigeria cannot be deeply examine without undoubtedly expatiate and elucidate on Education and Truancy. "Education in its broadest sense is an act or an experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual" (Rai and Kumar 2010; Targowski 2011; Ololube and Egbezor 2012; Lipsky and Gartner 2013; Bowles 2014; Rose and Porgio 2015). It can also be defined as the procedure by which people intentionally broadcast their amassed knowledge, ability, talents, and principles from one generation to another. Different scholars have given different definitions as to what is really meant by education. Oladejo (2002) defined education as a process through which individual group or society at large can be developed by transmitting the societal cultural heritage from one generation to another. Rusk and Scotland (1979), defines education as "a process through which foster in individual, desirable and relevant changes in behaviour and attitude". These definitions indicate that education involves the interaction of many factors.

These factors are: the subject matter, the environment and teaching methods of teachers, all of which contribute in no small measure to the understanding of what is to be learnt. Also, Atolagbe (1999) opines that education is a reference to be a life-long learning process which enables an individual recipient to live in the human society as an effective and acceptable member of society.

Truancy among the adolescent on the other hand "is an educational, social and enforcement problem". According to Ingersoll and Lebourf (1997), "truancy is a symptom; it is the result of one or more factors in an adolescent's life which prevent regular school attendance. The possible causes and contributing factors of truancy are numerous and diverse".

It should be noted that a number of factors do influence truancy among the secondary school adolescent in Nigeria. Therefore, some of these factors are as follows:

- ♦ Psychological factors, which has to do with the mental ability of the students;
- ♦ Economic factors, which has to reconcile with lack of fund to buy reading materials;
- ♦ Interest, which has to do with both parents interest and students interest towards school;

- ♦ Teachers' influence in term of teaching methods and mannerism being exhibited in the class by the teacher;
- ♦ School influence in term of provision of conducive learning environment.

It should be pointed out that the social inequality which is termed as "Social Stratification" has a greater impact on the truancy among the school-going students in Nigeria. There are variations in parents' educational attainment, occupation, economics position, home settings, parents' educational point of value etc. Hence, it is very glaring that children from high status parents or educated parent would perform or improve on their academic pursuits and they would stay in school without any deviation to school rules and regulations if they are properly monitored compared to the children from low status parents or the illiterate parents. Therefore, it is pertinent to stress at this juncture that socio-economic status had adverse effects on the causes of truancy among the secondary school adolescents in Nigeria.

### **Problem Statement**

Apparently, truancy problem among the adolescent in various secondary schools in Nigeria is different from one another due to their parents' socio-economic background. These differences make the researchers to find out what contributes to truancy attitudes and behaviour among the secondary school adolescents and the influence which socio-economic status of parents have on the truancy attitudes of their children. Hence, this study makes attempt to provide answers to the following questions: What are the causes of truancy? What are the contributing factors of truancy in our society particularly in Nigeria?

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This paper uses diverse review of a literature methodology from journals, books, conference reports, internet sources; and National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) publications to raise debates, discourses on issues pertaining to the influence of socio-economic status on truancy among the secondary school students in Nigeria.

### **Objective of the Study**

This study examines the influence of socio-economic status on truancy among secondary school students in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

- ♦ What are the causes of truancy among high school students in Nigeria?

### **Theoretical Review**

This study presents the review of the existing literature which is relevant to this study. Therefore, the theory of truancy is considered in the itinerary of this study.

### ***The Theory of Truancy***

Different scholars have elicited different theory as to what is really meant by truancy. Bandura (1977), Oetting and Beauvais (1986, 1987), Oetting and Donnermeyer (1998), Berkowitz and Bier (2015) and Kim et al. (2015) emphasised on the functions of peers and civic education. Interestingly, "their orientation emphasised the learning of behaviour and beliefs supportive of those behaviours often in the peer context. Those with deviant peers are thus more likely to obtain social rewards for involvement in deviance, including both truancy and marijuana use. In addition, a great deal of study has identified the importance of family on the pro-social development of youth in general (Bronfenbrenner 1986a; Repetti et al. 2002; Willis and Nagel 2015) and in particular, with regard to substance uses (Velleman et al. 2005). In fact, ineffective parenting or poor parenting monitoring and low attachment between parents and child have all been identified as risk factor for substance use among young people National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) (1982) as well as more general forms of anti-social behaviour that could include truancy in general (Loeber and Stouthamer 1986) has also been identified as the importance of family on the pro-social development of youth. In addition, low parental education and family poverty may also exert a significant influence on both truancy and initiations of drug use" (Trucco et al. 2014).

However, "truancy is an educational, social and enforcement problem. Truancy is a symptom; it is the result of one or more factors in a child's life which prevent regular school attendance. It should be noted that the possible causes and contributing factors of truancy are numerous and diverse". Hence, an attempt at resolution must be made if any far reaching impact is to be made in each individual case of truancy.

## OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

### Causes and Contributing Factors of Truancy

“Truancy is a three-fold problem. These factors stemming from the child, family, school and community” (Ayeni 1988). The succeeding are not comprehensive lists. There might be other causes and conditions and those listed would not pertain in every instance. The list below merely provides possible causes and contributing factors to truant behaviour according to (Ayeni 1988):

#### Child

These are some of the contributing factors of child in truancy issues:

- ♦ “Poor self-concept; low self-esteem;
- ♦ Low academics; particularly behind in reading and mathematics;
- ♦ Social; isolated, lack of positive peer relationships at school.
- ♦ Feeling of lack of control over life (that is, No matter how hard I try I will not succeed);
- ♦ Little or no extra-curricular involvement”.

This author also stressed that, the possible causes and contributing factors of truancy are numerous and diverse in a child’s life.

#### Family

From clear observation and testing of facts, family plays a major role in the academic propagation of their children. Family can either make or break the education of their children. The contributing factors of family to their children truancy are enumerated below:

- ♦ Parents “lack appreciation for value of education;
- ♦ Some parents are also high-school drop-outs;
- ♦ Financial difficulties (lack of adequate nutrition, clothing, transportation, inability to pay for their children school fees);
- ♦ Ineffective parenting; lack of parental control and supervision”.

#### School

School is a place where wrong is being corrected or perfected. It is a home away from

homes where educational influences are inculcated to the child learning. Below are the contributing factors of school to the truancy of a child.

- ♦ “Uninteresting and irregular curriculum;
- ♦ Improper class placement (above or below abilities);
- ♦ Failure to identify and provide service from problem students;
- ♦ Poor pupil-teacher relationship;
- ♦ Insufficient counseling and guidance staff”.

#### Community

Below are the contributing factors of community to the truancy of a child at school:

- ♦ Lack of support and encouragement from the community members and leaders for a child or children to study effectively and efficiently at school;
- ♦ “Lack of or unresponsive community service agencies;
- ♦ Community upheaval, cataclysm, turmoil, catastrophe and social change;
- ♦ Loss of neighborhood schools and sense of “ownership” of schools”.

Generally speaking, truancy among the high school students in Nigeria has been observed as a key to students’ failure (Yinusa and Basil 2008; Nakpodia 2010; Abrifor 2015). Arguably, as observed from various studies conducted by many researchers on the issues of truancy among high school students in some selected African countries, their findings shows that not many students willingly decided to be absent from schools or ignored classes but some of their problems was as a result of poor parental background (Ibrahim 2012; Gordon-Muir 2014). In addition, findings show that some of them preferred to visit their friends or peers at home or restaurants without thinking or considering what the future implication of these could be (Brickhouse et al. 2000; Ball et al. 2002; Kaufman and Feldman 2004; Ross MS 2015). It has been observed that the majority of these students did not have clear understanding or knowledge value of education despite the fact that education would change their life for better and at the long run responsible for their parents, societies, communities and the nation at large (Osborne 1996). It is at this moment that this paper is conversing to the parents, all the principals of various high

schools in Nigeria and some other high schools in African countries where the rate of truancy among students is extremely high or very rampant to make sure that they take adequate measure in order curb truancy among high school students in their vicinity. Most importantly, this paper is also advocating to the government and her policy-makers to urgently embark on strong policy that would encourage many high school students to ignore truancy attitudes and make learning their first priority.

The authors of this paper debate and argue that the causes for truancy encompass a wide range of possibilities and in fact, they emerged from the problems in the family, school, and community. If a reduction in truancy can be made, the participation of the family, school, and community will be required in remediation efforts.

### CONCLUSION

Apparently, this study has shown that environment has greater influence on the students in secondary schools. This is because environment in which the students' lives have influence in their style of living. When the environment is not conducive and more importantly comfortable for the students, it is usually difficult for them to have a breakthrough and in fact achieved a sound academic success in their lives. In addition, the study actually shows that a child can become truant when he or she is living in an environment doom with abject poverty which makes academic performance woeful and also entails truancy attitudes.

It is clear from this study that children from a rich family perform better than those children from a poor home. The study further reveals that social economic status of a child determined the type of behaviour that the child will embark upon. It is also clear that a child from a poor family usually behaves irrational and perform inimically, ill-disposed and hostile which invariably and consistently endangered their academic performance at the school. In a nutshell, social economic status of a child is a prerequisite to his or her academic performance and a subset to truancy behaviour at school.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Effort should be made to establish counseling units so that students can have access to

counseling on the side effects of truancy in academic performance.

Religious bodies should also be encouraged by the government to shoulder the responsibility of teaching and appealing to children on the moral aspect of education and obedient to their parents and as well organize programmes to give more awareness on the implication of truancy attitudes to students in the society.

The curriculum planner should design curriculum in such a way that academic syllabus would be very interesting and the school environment should also be conducive for learning. The researchers believed that these recommendations would encourage the students to stay at school and focus on their studies and finally improve their academic performance in order to aspire for better future.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God be all the glory and praise, for His tender mercies, loving kindness and grace to carry out this research and to finish it well.

The authors of this paper would like to thank the University of Fort Hare. This study would not be possible without her funding.

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**Paper received for publication on June 2015**  
**Paper accepted for publication on December 2015**