

Assessment of Factors Influencing Students' Absenteeism in Demonstration Secondary School, Federal College of Education, Zaria

Ashiat Magaji Ahmed

*Department of Business Education
School of Vocational and Technical Education
Federal College of Education, Zaria
ahmedaishat615@gmail.com*

Abstract

The study was conducted on assessment of factors influencing students' absenteeism in demonstration secondary school, Federal College of Education (FCE), Zaria. The study employed survey research design. The population of the study consist of all the 200 junior secondary school students in Business studies in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria which was also used as the sample size for the study. The instrument for data collection is a questionnaire titled "Assessment of Factors Influencing Students' Absenteeism Questionnaire" (AFISAQ). The data collected from the respondents was analysed to answer each research question. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. In taking decision on the research questions, mean scores of 2.50 and above on the four point ratings was chosen as acceptance or positive while those below 2.50 were regarded as negative and were not accepted. Result of the finding showed that majority of the respondents disagreed, showing that students' interest does not influence their absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria.

Keywords: factors, students, absenteeism, secondary, Zaria.

Introduction

A school is set-up for the main purpose of bringing students from different families together under one roof i.e. a classroom. *Attendance* is the concept of people, individually or as a group, appearing at a location for a previously scheduled event. Marburger (2016) found that attendance was higher in classes where absenteeism was penalised and, again, that higher attendance led to better exam results; earlier research revealed that absenteeism was higher on Fridays and increased as the semester progressed.

Good (2014) further described irregular attendance as a failure of the students to be physically present in the school for reasons that are not recognized by the school authority as legitimate. This may be in the form of absence, truancy, illegal works such as being on the family's farm or being compelled by their mothers to stay at home to take care of babies. Hence attendance is an important administrative record, used by parents and school authority to monitor, control and supervise students' activities in schools. A student that is not regular, in school, faces learning problems resulting from the late

coming to school, inability to read and not consulting with the teacher (Onomuodeke, 2014).

Clark (2008) defined absenteeism as "not attending school without a legitimate reason." Sinha (2007) argues that absenteeism should be defined as "being absent without excuse" and considered to be a problem. Since there is a variety of basic regulations and the definition of "excuse" varies across countries concerned, it is difficult to fully define what is considered absent without excuse. Clark (2008) explained it as follows: "without a valid excuse communicated by the student's family, not to be at school during the school day or during a part of the school day". As indicated, it is not only an excuse that is needed but an excuse that is considered to be valid. One student may miss class due to health problems, while another student may be absent due to a family vacation.

Lannegrand-Willems, Cosnefroy and Lecigne (2012) defined absenteeism as, "a student being absent in school with or without an excuse". Robinson (2009) considered absenteeism by describing behaviour and defined it as "not attending the school with or without an excuse, miss some classes or being late for class". Regardless of the reason for absence, the fact is that the student is missing a portion of the academic process. Additionally, students who were absent with excuse, such as students staying away from school for a long time due to health problems, have difficulty in adapting when they return to school and may develop a habit of absenteeism without excuse. In other words, when "absenteeism without a legitimate reason" is removed from the scope of the problem, the disruption in children's learning process and other problems that may be experienced in the future should not be ignored. Focusing on absenteeism as a problem, the duration is as important as the type of absenteeism. As Lannegrand-Willems et al. (2012) indicated, when absenteeism is rare, it is not considered to indicate a problematic situation. However, increased absenteeism is considered to be an indicator of various risk factors. Generally, 10-40% absenteeism during an educational calendar year is considered to indicate a problem. Examining the absenteeism within a school day is also important. Some students may miss an entire day of school while others may only miss one or two courses. The duration of and classification of absenteeism (with or without excuse) varies from country to country. However, the common point of view is that as the student's absenteeism increases, exposure to risk factors also rises.

Absenteeism can be defined as persistent, habitual, and unexplained absence from school (Brooks, 2017). Absenteeism occurs when a student is absent without reason 20% or more of school time; this is consistently identified regardless of the specific circumstances of the absenteeism (Bond, 2014). Komakech and Osuu (2014) investigated the major cause for students' absenteeism and the possible solutions to the cause in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Nigeria. The findings showed that the lack of scholastic requirements, household work, lack of interest in education, hunger at school or lack of mid-day meals, sexual harassment at school, long distance to school, illness or disease, loss of parent or close relative, peer influence, and harsh punishment at school were the top ten causes of students' absenteeism in schools.

Regular attendance to school has been described as the pre-requisite for acquiring skills and knowledge required for academic success. It enables a child to learn new information that will help him develop the desired skills and potentials. But it may be difficult for a child to achieve these if he is continuously absent from school. School absenteeism is defined as excused or unexcused absences from school by a child (Reid, 2005). Kearny (2008) puts it to be the persistent, habitual, unexpected and unexplained absences from school of a child of compulsory school age. It then implies that absenteeism occurs when a child absents himself from school for whatever reason or when constant learning is interrupted. School absenteeism is a serious problem in public schools which takes the form of truancy, school refusal and school withdrawal. Truancy is the absence of a child from school without the knowledge or permission of parents (Cunningham, 2005). The child leaves home and pretends to be going to school but he turns away and gets himself involved in other activities.

The magnitude of irregular attendance at school and classes does not only affect the absent students, but also impacts on teachers' ability to articulate the curriculum requirements, and to plan and present instructional activities in an organized and meaningful way.

Statement of the problem

Student absenteeism continues to be a major problem. There are many factors which cause students to be absent from school. Some of these are legitimate. However, the amount of truancy and excessive absence from school continues to be a concern. Absenteeism adversely affects many aspects of a school's programme as well as the individual academic achievement of the students involved. The schools are challenged to create workable solutions to the problem based upon the needs of the student as well as the goals of the school itself.

From the experience of the researcher, students' attendance is low in some educational development area in Ikosi Ejinrin Local government schools. Teachers are in school, while many learners are at home. During examination period, there is 100% attendance in school. Examination oriented students' attendance by nature depends on the knowledge of the regular attendance.

The problem of class attendance and performance has been identified in school. They include academic under achievement, which increases costs, wastage, difficulty in making friends which could lead to boredom, loss of confidence, and engagement in premature sexual activities which could lead to pregnancy resulting in drop-out and stress among young people. The society suffers as the children of school age hang around in the streets intimidating other people and stealing properties of those who are in school or other places of work (Davidson et al., 2003). Attendance default also results to poor academic performance, loss of friends and partners, disruption in class when absentees return to school, difficulty in keeping accurate records, reduces ability to meet instructional target and damage school reputation (Oghubu, 2010).

Objective of the study

The specific objectives includes to:-

1. Examine the influence of students' lack of interest in school on their absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, Zaria.
2. Assess the influence of peer group on students' absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, Zaria.

Research questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study.

1. What is the influence of students' lack of interest in school on their absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, Zaria.?
2. What is the influence of peer group on students' absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, Zaria?

Methodology

The study employed survey research design. This design is considered appropriate because it focuses on the observation and the perception of the existing situation. The population of the study consists of all the 200 junior secondary school students in Business studies in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria which was also used as the sample size for the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Assessment of Factors Influencing Students' Absenteeism Questionnaire" (AFISAQ). The data collected from the respondents was analysed to answer each research question. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. In taking decision on the research questions, mean scores of 2.50 and above on the four point ratings was chosen as acceptance or positive while those below 2.50 were regarded as negative and were not accepted.

Presentation of results

Research question one: What is the influence of students' interest on absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria?

In order to provide answer to the stated research question, data collected was analysed as presented on table 1.

Table 1: Opinion of respondents on influence of students’ interest on absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria

s/n	Questionnaire item	Response Categories						Remark
		SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D	
1	You are less connected to school because you hate the teachers taking the subjects	80	30	100	20	2.30	0.39	Disagreed
2	You miss classes because the subject is boring	120	0	140	0	2.60	0.75	Agreed
3	I absent myself from business studies class because of lack of self-confidence	240	45	30	10	3.25	1.07	Agreed
4	Your attendance to classes is low due to lack of self-respect	60	45	60	40	2.05	0.10	Disagreed
5	You miss class because you do not want to do the subjects	40	0	150	15	2.05	0.68	Disagreed

Table 1 shows that the responses to item 1, 4 and 5 had mean score below 2.50 (cut off mean) which is the level of rejection while item 2 and 3 had mean score above 2.50 which is the level of acceptance. This result shows that majority of the respondents disagreed, showing that students interest does not influence their absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria.

Research question two: What is the influence of peer group on students’ absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria?

In order to provide answer to the stated research question, data was collected from respondents. The analysis of the data collected is presented on table 2.

Table 2: Opinion of respondents on influence of peer group on students’ absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria

s/n	Questionnaire item	Response Categories						Remark
		SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D	
6	Peer negative influence affects your attendance in class	200	108	8	10	3.26	0.92	Agreed
7	Social group influences lead to your absenteeism from school	360	0	0	10	3.70	1.78	Agreed
8	Advice from friends affects your attendance in school	240	60	0	20	3.20	1.10	Agreed
9	Cultism influences your absenteeism from school	280	36	16	10	3.42	1.30	Agreed
10	Criminal activities engaged by you influence your absenteeism from school.	400	0	0	0	4.00	2.00	Agreed

Table 2 shows that the responses to item 6 - 10 had mean score above 2.50 (cut off mean) which is the level of acceptance. This result shows that majority of the respondents agreed that peer group influences students' absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria.

Discussion of the finding

The result of questions one shows that majority of the respondents disagreed, showing that students interest does not influence their absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria. Also, the result of question two shows that majority of the respondents agreed that peer group influences students' absenteeism from school in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria.

Conclusion

The study concluded that one of the problems that affect the academic performance of students in secondary school system today in Nigeria is absenteeism. The study concluded that peer group and home factor significantly contribute to absenteeism of students in secondary schools in Demonstration Secondary School, FCE, Zaria. Lack of seriousness on the part of the students; poor school and academic performances; students becoming problematic to 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.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study. A conscious implementation of these recommendations will go a long way in the improvement on the cases of students' absenteeism in secondary schools.

1. Parents should be interested in the peer group or friends their child move with or keep and watch their activities with keen interest.
2. 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.

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