

Counselors and Teacher's Ranking of Factors Causing Truancy Among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was specifically designed to find out the following: (1) To know and understand the ranking of the causes of truancy among students by teachers and counsellors. (2) To set priority areas for counselling interventions. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated for the investigation. The study utilized descriptive survey method. The population of the study was JSS1 students in Port Harcourt, Obio-Akpor, and Okrika Local government areas. A sample size of 150 teachers and counsellors were used by simple random sampling. The Teachers/Counsellors Truancy Rating scale (TCSTRS) was used. The study concluded that: (1) There is no significant difference between teachers and counsellors ranking of factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. (2) There is no significant difference between teachers and counsellors priority in selecting areas of counselling interventions in factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State. Four recommendations were made in the research paper.

Keywords: Counselors; Teachers; Secondary school students; Nigeria

Introduction

Truancy could be seen as absence from school for no tangible or legitimate reason. Students do skip classes for several hours or the whole day at least once or several days in the academic session. Truancy is a significant problem in Nigeria and other parts of the world, mostly under develop and developing countries [1]. The outcome of truancy among secondary school students has been linked to very serious short and long term consequences for pupils, youths, families, communities in Nigeria. Based on the above background, this researcher is interested to know and understand the perception of counsellors and teachers in ranking the causes of truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Researchers have identified several possible causes of truancy among secondary school students. These are as follows: Individual risk factors, family factors, school factors, and community factors [2]. Individual risk factors could be attributed to low self-esteem, learning disabilities, substance abuse, deviance, maladaptive and personal distress [3].

Family factors could be seen as poor or unhealthy communication climate, in which continuous distrust is the center of relationship, resulting to lack of openness and trustworthiness. Also, single parent family structure could likely contribute to truancy among students. Parents play significant roles in the upbringing of children, which in greater extent interplay with parental personality. Authoritarian parents are restrictive and demonstrate lack of outward manifestation of love and warmth toward siblings, which could lead to truancy. Similarly, permissive parents sometimes called *laissez-fair* do demonstrate little control over children, who in turn develop low-achieving skills, and lack social responsibility [4]. It is often said that "charity begins at home", so one can equally say that children learning start at home with their parents or guardians. In Nigeria some parents of low socio economic status and illiteracy often engage their children in farming and petty trading during school periods, encouraging truancy [5].

School factors are not ruled out of possible causes of truancy among students in Rivers State public and private schools. Some teachers have been found to be very unfriendly, hostile to their class children. In

some cases teachers skip class for their other daily activities, leaving the students unattended to, or being occupied by regularly monitored class activities. Such behaviors of teachers encouraged truancy among students [1,5]. Also, some of the school premises are occupied with uncompleted buildings serving as hideouts for students, as such, contributing to truancy.

In addition, community factors are noticeable contributors to truancy among students. Some communities in the rural and urban areas of Rivers State encourage drug activities, gangs and other criminal activities. In other words, some communities are insecure for students to attend classes without frequent communal clashes leading to loss of lives, including innocent children. Fear of the community where schools are sited could increase truancy [6].

Statement of the Problem

Maintaining school attendance has become a major concern of school administrators, governments and parents in many private and public schools, of which the concern is greater in public schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. This is because truancy has become more common over the years and has created serious problems in the educational system today in Rivers State, and the rest of Nigeria. Many factors such as: Student's factors, family factors, school factors, and community factors have been researched and possible solutions recommended. But rating of scale of priority of intervention of the several factors mentioned has not been fully researched.

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Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to find out the following:

1. To know and understand the ranking of the causes of truancy among students by teachers and counsellors.
2. To set priority areas for counselling interventions

Research questions

1. How do secondary school teachers and counsellors rank the causes of truancy among students in secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent school counsellors can set priority areas for counselling interventions?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between teachers and counsellors ranking of factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between teachers and counsellors priority in selecting areas of counselling interventions in factors causing truancy.

Method

The design of the study was a descriptive survey method. The population was JSS1, students in Port Harcourt, Obio-Akpor and Okirika Local Government Areas of Rivers State. The study utilized 150 teachers and counsellors, made of 90 teachers and 60 counsellors from 60 (sixty) randomly composed co-educational secondary schools. The instrument was the Teacher/Counsellors Students Truancy Rating Scale (TCSTRS). The instrument was developed by the researcher and validated by experts in measurement and evaluation. Reliability coefficient of 0.81 was established through Crombach Alpha. The "TCSTRS" was based on (Low=2, medium=3, and High=4, Highest=5) of which 5 is the highest rating of priority intervention of the factors causing truancy among students. The t-test was used to test the two hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Rating and Rank Order of Priority Intervention of causes of Truancy among Secondary Students by Teachers and Counsellors (90 teachers and 60 counsellors) is given in Table 1.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between teachers and counselors ranking of factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. The result is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-values is .714 while, the critical t-value is 1.96. since the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating that there is no significant difference between teachers and counselors ranking of factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between teachers and counsellors priority in selecting areas of counselling intervention in factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-values is .387 while, the critical t-values is 1.96. Since the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating that there is no significant difference between teachers and counselors priority in selecting areas of counselling intervention in factors causing truancy.

S/No	Items	Rating	Rank Order
Student Factors			
1	Poor self-concept, low self-esteem	3	3 rd
2	Fear of school, teacher/administrators	5	1 (1 st priority intervention)
3	Emotional instability	3	3
4	Learning disabilities	3	3
5	Substance abuse	4	2 (2 nd priority)
6	Deviance/Maladaptive	3	3
Family Factors			
1	Unhealthy communication climate: Distrust	3	
2	Lack for value of education	3	
3	Financial difficulties	3	
4	Lack of parental control and supervision	3	
5	Used child for family/trading	5	1 st (priority intervention)
6	Substance abuse parents	4	2 nd priority intervention
School Factors			
1	Uninteresting/irrelevant curriculum	3	
2	Teachers unfriendliness/hostile	5	1 st priority intervention
3	Teachers skipping classes	4	2 nd priority intervention
4	uncompleted buildings	4	2 nd priority intervention
5	Poorly kept environment	3	
Community Factors			
1	Lack of community support for schools	3	
2	Encouraging drug activities	4	2 nd priority intervention
3	Insecurity: community classes	5	1 st priority intervention
4	Unsafe environment.	3	

Table 1: Rating and Rank Order of Priority Intervention of causes of Truancy among Secondary Students by Teachers and Counsellors (90 teachers and 60 counsellors).

Variables	N	X	STD	DF	P	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Teachers	90	16.80	8.92	148	0.05	.714	1.96	NS
Counsellors	60	15.90	8.27					

Table 2: The t-test Analysis of the mean and standard Deviation of Teachers and Counsellors ranking of factors causing truancy among Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

Variables	N	X	STD	DF	P	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Teachers	90	33.49	3.22	148	0.05	.387	1.96	NS
Counsellors	60	33.56	3.43					

Table 3: The t-test Analysis of the mean and standard Deviation of teachers and counsellors priority in selecting areas of counselling interventions in factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Discussion

This study investigated the following: (1) There is no significant difference between teachers and counsellors ranking of factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. (2) There is no significant difference between teachers and counselors priority in selecting areas of counselling interventions in factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State. The findings of this investigation revealed that teachers and counsellor ranking and prioritizing counselling intervention of factors causing truancy among students in secondary schools did not differ. The findings support that of Lotz and Lee [7] and Kilpatrick [8] indicating parental family influence as key contributory factor to increase truancy among students. Also, Unger and Laing concluded that youths that were allowed to work and attended school showed higher rate of absenteeism. Enomoto [9] supported that less caring teachers and administrators are contributory

factor to truancy among students. Similarly, Wisconsin statutes upheld that parental factors contributed highest factors of truancy among students in Wisconsin [10].

Conclusion

The study concluded that:

There is no significant difference between teachers and counsellors ranking of factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. Both teachers and counsellors ranked parental factor (using child for farming/trading); school factor (fear of school, teacher/administrators) and community factor (insecurity/community clashes) were seen highest contributory factors.

There is no significant difference between teachers and counselors priority in selecting areas of counselling interventions in factors causing truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State. Nevertheless, the rankings of high and highest categories are for priority counselling interventions.

Recommendations

- a. School counsellors should develop workshops to educate teachers and administrators, families, and communities on behaviour modification strategies.
- b. Government should assist the school systems with adequate security services to check students leaving the school premises on school periods.

- c. Government should enact tougher laws to punish parents who engage students for farm work or petty trading during school hours.
- d. Individual and group counselling with adequate modalities should be provided to students with truancy associated problems.

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