



## *RESEARCH ARTICLE*

### **THE IMPACT OF TRUANCY ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IKEDURU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, IMO STATE**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the impact of truancy on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Ikeduru Local Government Area (LGA) of Imo State. A descriptive survey design was employed. Three research questions guided the study, aligning with its stated objectives. The population consisted of all secondary school students within Ikeduru LGA, totaling 1,720, from which a sample of 320 respondents was randomly selected. Data were collected using a structured instrument titled *Truancy and Academic Performance Questionnaire (TAPQ)*, which was validated by experts in Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. Descriptive statistics, specifically mean scores, were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that both family-related and school-related factors contribute significantly to student truancy. Furthermore, the adolescent developmental stage was identified as having a substantial influence on truancy behaviour. It was also found that truancy has a negative effect on students' academic performance. Based on these findings, recommendations were made, including the need for early intervention by parents and teachers, and the promotion of a positive teacher-student relationship to mitigate truancy and its adverse effects on learning outcomes.

Keywords: Truancy, impact, academic performance, Ikeduru, public schools,

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## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

Truancy is a pervasive and deeply concerning problem that significantly affects students' academic pursuits, particularly at the secondary school level. It is recognized as one of the recurring classroom issues, often manifesting as students roaming the streets during school hours while still dressed in their uniforms (Oluremi, 2013). As such, truancy poses a serious threat to learning and academic development. Schools often find it challenging to address or mitigate its impacts. Truant students typically fail to discover their academic interests early on and may struggle to reinforce them later (Miraflor & Patrick, 2020). Furthermore, Newport Academy (2024) emphasizes that truancy not only hampers academic progress but also contributes to mental health issues such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression.

In Nigeria, especially in Imo State the problem of truancy has reached an alarming level. Without urgent and coordinated intervention by teachers, parents, school administrators, and educational stakeholders, the situation may escalate beyond control. Many students engage in truancy to partake in activities that fall outside the authority of both home and school, reflecting systemic inadequacies in the Nigerian educational system rather than criminal tendencies (Chris & Hume, 2019). The education system appears to neglect individual student needs and motivations, which can exacerbate this issue. In Ikeduru Local Government Area, for instance, students have been reported skipping school to engage in non-academic activities such as hunting, playing video games, idle socializing, and buying snacks. These behaviours suggest that students often lack a sense of purpose or supervision during school hours. While Nigerian secondary schools are tasked with promoting moral values like punctuality, honesty, diligence, and respect for rules, some have instead become environments that enable indiscipline and deviance.

Derrick, Kenneth, Nutifafa, Henry & Paschal (2022) identifies key factors influencing student academic performance and truancy, including students' health, learning environment, school infrastructure, teacher-student relationships, and family dynamics. Additionally, some students engage in romantic relationships or seek refuge from strict home or school environments, which may drive them to absenteeism. According to Chukwuka (2013), truancy stems from a combination of family, school, economic, and individual factors. Similarly, Isiaku, Adama, Nwankwo, and Abida (2020) argue that these variables do not act



in isolation but interact to produce truant behaviours. Ajali and Olutola (2007), citing a Skeken daily publication on poor performance in the 2004 WAEC examination, categorized contributing factors into student-related issues (such as truancy), societal influences, and governmental failures in educational funding and policy implementation. Overall, truancy undermines effective learning and remains a significant factor in the declining academic performance observed among Nigerian secondary school students.

### **1.1. Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the issue of truancy and its impact on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Ikeduru, Imo State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the major causes of truancy among secondary school students.
2. Examine the extent to which truancy affects students' academic performance.
3. Explore possible strategies for minimizing truancy among secondary school students.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

To guide the study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the main causes of truancy among secondary school students in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State?
2. To what extent does truancy affect students' academic performance?
3. What are the possible strategies for minimizing truancy among secondary school students?

## **2. 0. Conceptualization and Literature Review**

Truancy, as defined by Chukwuka (2013), refers to the act of being absent from school without a legitimate reason. It is a habitual form of absenteeism that disrupts the educational process and negatively affects student achievement. Truancy is a growing problem globally, and its implications are not confined to one region or educational system. It undermines the effectiveness of education and is often linked with broader social issues such as delinquency, academic failure, and eventual dropout.



Across different contexts, truancy is generally defined as repeated, unexcused absences from school. However, the criteria for identifying truant behaviour vary among districts, states, and countries. According to Taiwo and Akano (2011), hundreds of thousands of students in the United States are absent from school daily without valid excuses. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, a significant portion of the student population – 1.5% in England, 1.8% in Wales, 2.0% in Scotland, and 2.4% in Ulster – engage in truancy. In Scotland, Tobin (2009) reported that one in every five students is truant on a daily basis.

Wilkins (2008) argues that attendance is the most critical variable in measuring academic achievement, indicating that addressing truancy must be a priority in school policy. Lorenze (2009) adds that in many education systems, children are considered truant when they miss seven or more school days without lawful justification.

From various scholarly perspectives, truancy involves skipping classes or entire school days without appropriate permission. Qaiser, Ishtiaq & Ikram (2017) categorize truancy into two main types: full-day absenteeism and class-skipping, both of which significantly impact student learning outcomes. Although some absences may result from health or emotional problems, as Lorenze (2009) notes, many instances of truancy stem from behavioural or socio-economic factors.

The causes of truancy are multifaceted. Brodewicz (2024) identifies several contributors, including lack of parental involvement, peer pressure, academic struggles, school-related issues such as ineffective discipline and poor learning environments, and an unengaging curriculum. These factors can be grouped into three broad categories: community influences, parental factors, and student-related variables.

Further supporting this, Maduabuchi (2013) and Vanbreda (2014) found that broken homes, poverty, lack of family support, substance abuse, and poor parental supervision are strong predictors of truant behaviour. Similarly, Zhang, Katsiyannis, Barrett, and Wilson (2007) classify the causes into four main categories: family-related, school-related, economic, and individual (student) factors. Family variables may include the educational background of parents, level of supervision, household income, and domestic stability.



The effects of truancy extend beyond academic failure. Newport Academy (2024) notes consequences such as low self-esteem, loneliness, mental health challenges, and conflict within families. Kristi (2021) emphasizes that truancy has broader societal implications, serving as a precursor to dropout, substance abuse, delinquency, and teenage pregnancy. In the long term, it can lead to adult criminality, job and marital instability, and incarceration. Truancy contributes to community challenges by correlating with rising crime rates and a growing incarcerated population.

Christantus (2021) observes that truancy is more concentrated in large urban schools, particularly among low-income minority students. In such areas, dropout rates often exceed graduation rates, pointing to a systemic crisis in education equity. Inyang (2020) conducted a study in Cross River State, Nigeria, and found that truancy significantly impacted students' performance in English Language, supporting the idea that consistent attendance is essential to academic success.

In Nigeria, schools are expected to serve as moral and academic training grounds, promoting values such as honesty, diligence, and respect for rules. However, the reality in many schools is far from ideal. Students often engage in social vices such as smoking and petty theft, activities that may be fueled by a lack of parental guidance and an ineffective educational environment. Chukwuka (2013) and Isiaku et al. (2020) agree that truancy is seldom caused by a single factor, but rather by a combination of family instability, peer pressure, poor school climate, and systemic failures in the education sector.

Value allocation has been the primary factor that determines attitude of the citizenry towards the affairs of the state and how they interact among themselves on any background (Nwagbo & Abaneme, 2019). On these backdrops therefore, Ajali & Olutola (2007) reported that a major cause of poor academic performance in Nigeria's WAEC examinations is truancy, which is closely linked with societal problems and government neglect in educational funding. Ultimately, when the school fails to identify and address the root causes of truancy, students are more likely to disengage from learning entirely. Unfortunately, the rise in truancy undermines these goals and reflects a breakdown in both family and institutional roles in child development. Schools struggle to manage the phenomenon due to inadequate



facilities, lack of motivation, weak teacher-student relationships, and insufficient policy enforcement. In another dimension, truancy if it's not nipped in bud leads to security problems, security is a multidimensional issue. For us, security is seen beyond traditional maintenance of military strength to ward off aggression against the state, or the expansion of apparatus of internal security to ensure domestic order. The security of a nation traverses through the complex web of political, economic, social and cultural structures, and links with the whole range of inter-state relations (Abaneme & Nwagbo, 2015).

The increasing rate of truancy among secondary school students in Nigeria, and specifically in Ikeduru LGA of Imo State, has become a pressing concern. Despite various efforts by educators, parents, and policymakers, truancy remains a persistent issue with serious implications for students' academic success and personal development. Students who frequently miss school often perform poorly academically and are at a higher risk of dropping out entirely. The school system, expected to curb such behavior, often lacks the mechanisms and resources to do so effectively.

What remain unclear however, are the specific root causes of truancy in this local context and the extent to which these absences impact academic performance. Without a clear understanding of these dynamics, efforts to address the problem may remain ineffective. This study is therefore essential to fill that gap by investigating the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to truancy in secondary schools in Ikeduru LGA.

### **3.0. METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey design. According to Nkwocha (2016), the descriptive survey design is commonly used by researchers for research of this nature. The area of the study was Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State, comprising 29 communities. The total number of secondary school students in Ikeduru is one thousand seven hundred and twenty-four (1,724) students. The population of this study, therefore, comprised all senior secondary school students in Ikeduru Local Government Area. A sample of three hundred and twenty (320) respondents was randomly selected from five targeted schools within Ikeduru L.G.A.





The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Truancy on Academic Performance Questionnaire (TAPQ)". The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A and B. The research instrument was subjected to face and content validation by two experts in measurement and evaluation to ensure its appropriateness for the study.

For the purpose of data collection, the researcher personally visited the selected schools and administered the questionnaires to the respondents face-to-face. The completed questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents on the same day of administration. The data collected were analyzed using mean deviation in line with the research questions. Any item with a mean score of 2.5 and above was considered accepted, while any item with a mean score below 2.5 was considered rejected.

#### 4.0. RESULTS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS

##### 4.1. Presentation of Results

**Research Question One:** What are the main causes of truancy among secondary school students in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State?

**Table 1: Mean rating of the respondents on the main causes of truancy among secondary school students in Ikeduru Local Government Areas of Imo State.**

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	Decision
1	Family instability promote truancy among students	200	100	15	5	320	3.5	<i>Accepted</i>
2	Child abuse and neglect encourages truancy	210	105	3	2	320	3.6	<i>Accepted</i>
3.	Uninteresting and irrelevant curriculum may lead to truancy	180	130	7	3	320	3.5	<i>Accepted</i>
4	Peer influence leads to truancy	208	110	2	-	320	3.6	<i>Accepted</i>
5	Poor teachers relationship promote truancy	180	140	-	-	320	3.5	<i>Accepted</i>

##### Grand Mean 3.5

Result on table 1 revealed a grand mean of 3.5 which is above the decision mean of 2.5. This implies that the respondent agreed that to a large extent that adolescent stage promote truancy.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent does truancy affect students' academic performance?

**Table 2:** Mean Rating of the respondents on the extent to which truancy affect students' academic performance

S/N	Item Statement	VLE	LE	SE	VSE	N	X	Decision
1	Truancy can lead to poor academic performance	210	105	3	2	320	3.6	<i>Accepted</i>
2	Truancy can lead to school drop out	180	110	20	10	320	2.8	<i>Accepted</i>
3.	Truancy can lead to substance abuse	170	80	50	20	320	3.2	<i>Accepted</i>
4	It can lead to make adjustment behaviors like theft, and vandalism	200	100	10	10	320	3.5	<i>Accepted</i>
5	Truancy can lead to teenage pregnancy, abortion and death	150	130	20	20	320	3.2	<i>Accepted</i>

**Grand Mean 3.2**

Result on table 2 revealed a grand mean of 3.2, which is greater than the decision mean of 2.5. This implies that the respondents accepted that truancy affects academic performance of students.

**Research Question Three:** What are the possible strategies for minimizing truancy among secondary school students?

**Table 3:** Mean rating of the respondents on possible ways of minimizing truancy among secondary school students.

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	Decision
1	Keeping attendance record by the class teacher	286	15	14	5	320	3.8	<i>Accepted</i>
2	Creating alternative to harsh punishment or use of negative reinforcement	255	50	10	5	320	3.7	<i>Accepted</i>
3.	Collective effort by the family and the school can help reduce truancy	190	60	40	30	320	3.2	<i>Accepted</i>
4	Creating a positive classroom environment	160	70	80	10	320	3.2	<i>Accepted</i>
5	Building positive relationship with students and parents	220	70	20	10	320	3.5	<i>Accepted</i>
6	Employing counseling services	200	90	10	10	320	3.4	<i>Accepted</i>

**Grand Mean 3.4**

Result on table 3, shows a grand mean of 3.4 which is greater than the decision mean of 2.5. This shows that the respondents agreed to all item raised for minimizing truancy.

**Summary of Findings**

The Findings revealed that the respondents agreed that to a large extent that adolescent stage promotes truancy. Also, truancy actually affects students' academic performance. More so, respondents agreed to all items raise for minimizing truancy.





## **4.2. Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study revealed that family instability, child abuse, poor teacher-student relationships, and child neglect are major causes of truancy among students. This finding aligns with the study by Olurem (2013), who established a significant relationship between truancy and academic performance. Similarly, Jude & Oziri (2018) identified poor home upbringing as a major contributor to truancy. In support of this, Van Breda (2014) also confirmed that home-related factors play a significant role in causing truancy.

Furthermore, the study revealed that truancy adversely affects the academic performance of students. This is in agreement with several research findings that show that truancy leads to poor academic achievement. Christantus (2022) also agreed, asserting that truancy often results in school dropout and negatively impacts students' academic outcomes.

Additionally, this study found that effective strategies such as keeping accurate attendance records, creating a positive classroom environment, building strong relationships with students and their parents, and providing counseling services can help reduce truancy among students. In line with this, Zhang *et al.* (2007) recommended instructional behaviour adjustments and community-based interventions as effective strategies for combating truancy in schools.

## **5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that truancy hinders effective learning and leads to poor academic performance among students. Regular absenteeism from school has severe negative consequences, not only for the truants themselves but also for their communities. These consequences may include short- and long-term threats to public safety and reduced future prospects for the affected youths.

### **5.2. Recommendations**

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Schools should be made attractive by providing flowers, artistic paintings, recreational facilities, and games equipment to sustain students' interest in school.



2. Parents should cultivate positive attitudes toward education and actively instill these values in their children to promote consistent school attendance.
3. Schools should minimize excessive manual labor and corporal punishment in order to discourage negative attitudes toward schooling and school activities.

### Competing Interest

The author declares that no conflicting interest exist in this paper.

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