

Locus of Control as Predictor of Truancy among Public Secondary School Students in Katsina State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated locus of control as predictor of truancy among secondary school students in Katsina state, Nigeria. To guide the study three hypotheses were formulated and tested. This study adopted a correlational research design. The sample consists of 346 students drawn from a population of 3,696 (SS II) students, using multi-stage sampling technique. The two instruments were used for data collections which were Locus of Control Questionnaire (LOCQ) and Students Truant Behaviour Questionnaire (STBQ). The internal consistency reliability coefficient obtained for Locus of Control Questionnaire (LOCQ) and Students Truant Behaviour Questionnaire (STBQ) were 0.83 and 0.67 respectively. Data collected were analyzed with descriptive statistics and inferential statistic at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between internal locus of control and truancy among secondary school students in Katsina State; and that there is significant gender difference in truancy among Senior Secondary School Students in Katsina State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that automated computerized register could help to identify truant students, and Parents should endeavour to visit their children and wards in their school without them being aware of such visits.

Key Word: Locus of control, Truancy, Secondary School Students

Introduction

Secondary school is a vital part of the education sector which has important role to play in a country's effort to elevate the quality of life of its inhabitants. The position of secondary school in Nigerian cannot be overlooked because it determines the academic and professional career of students. However, one of the challenges in education system in Nigeria is truancy which is the action of students to stay away from learning without any genuine reasons. National Policy on Education (2014) state that education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any peculiar individuals challenges, and education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society. Also it emphasizes that education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system (NPE, 2014).

Truancy in secondary school seems to be major challenges in the formal system of education in Nigeria, particularly in Katsina State. Students' punctuality is one of the basic requirements for effective and efficient teaching and learning process in any educational institutions. The prevailing situations occasioned by the current security, social and economic conditions among other reasons appear to inhibit the realization of the student's educational objectives of good performance. Truancy is a term that is generally defined by each individual as a specified number of unexcused absences from school over a designated period of time. "Chronic" or "habitual" truancy is a terms that is typically applied when a student exceeds a specified number of unexcused absences over a certain period of time that may result in court referrals (Smink & Heilbrunn, 2005).

One of the cruxes of educational problems is truancy among secondary school students in Nigerian society (Muhammed, 2019). Educational stakeholders believed that truancy is an undesirable act that is attributed to three core areas: (i) it is seen to be associated with the learner which manifests itself in form of boredom, loss of interest in school, peer group influence, lack of self-esteem and self-concept toward learning, young learners being bullied by older students, avoidance of tests, and lack of confidence (ii) It is believed to be primarily related to the family as a result of poor parenting, socio-economic factor, home and parental pressure (polygamous), lack of parental engagement in their children's education and learning and (iii) the school, which is resulted from harsh school rules and

regulations, irrelevant courses or curriculum, lack of relationship with teachers, poor school administration, high student/teacher ratio in class, poor level of societal participation in school system and poor parent-school communication. The reason why students involve in truancy may be different depending on the circumstances of each student. Sometimes, a student may be absent because he feels unsafe at school or on their way to or from school, family issues, financial demands, substance abuse, or mental health problems (Onukwufor, et al, 2015).

The possible effects of truancy could lead students to dropout from school which is the most obvious result of chronic absenteeism of the students. Truancy is seen by most educational experts as a problem indicating that a child is more likely not to achieve any academic success in school, join a gang or engage in other risky behaviour. Thomson (2020) opined that truancy often acts as a "gateway" behaviour that can lead to students trying drugs and alcohol, engaging in other criminal acts such as vandalism, theft, and ultimately dropping out from school altogether.

Locus of control as a variable in the study is a theory in personality psychology. It refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them. Ivancevich, et al (2005) agreed that, Locus of control is determined by the degree to which people believe their behaviour influence what happen to them. Abubakar (2015) buttressed that person's 'locus' is conceptualized as either internal meaning that - a person believes they can control their lives, or external meaning - they believe that their decision and life are controlled by environmental factors which they cannot influence. Ukoh and Okeke (2017) opined that locus of control is viewed as an important aspect of psychology, which refers to the strength of an individual's belief in the amount of control that they have over life-affecting situations and experiences. Individuals have varied opinions about whom and what controls their life. Some attributes the outcome of their endeavours to gods, luck or another person, while some will attribute the outcome of their endeavours to their own effort. Individuals can be classified as possessing either internal locus of control or external locus of control. Individuals who possess internal locus of control typically assume that they possess a degree of control over circumstances and events that happen to them. However, individuals who possess external locus of control believes that they have no control of what happens to them, which leads them to place responsibility and blame on external variables such as luck and gods. Gbonee (2013) reported that,

the feeling the internal control connotes the attitude that one can manipulate his environment for reinforcement.

In relation to truancy, locus of control is directly related to truancy in term of internal and external control. Since internal locus of control has to do with individuals' views on events as a result of their own action, they believe that any reward received as result of other variables (Tam-Shui 2014) and behaviour, individual are confident that they can control their lives. Therefore, individuals with high internal control were more successful in their academic and careers than those who have high level of external control which lead to truancy (Tarn-Shui, 2014). Similarly, individual students with an external locus of control view events as being under the control of external factors, they think that rewards are not dependent on their actions but on external factors such as luck or influence (Gan, et al, 2007). A person with internal locus of control is a person who feels that he/she is in control of his/her fate (success or failure) is within him/her, while the one with external attribute success or failure to other people.

Gender differences in truant behaviour have been a subject of significant research, as they can offer insights into the under lying factor s that influence absenteeism among male and female students. Studies indicate that male students are more likely to engage in truant behaviour than their female counterparts (Aqeel & Rehna, 2020). This trend has been attributed to various factors, including differences in socialization, peer influence, and engagement with school activities. Boys are often socialized to exhibit independence and risk-taking behaviours, which can manifest in higher rates of truant behaviour. Additionally, peer influence tends to be stronger among males, with boys more likely to skip school as part of group behaviour or to gain social acceptance (Heyder, et al., 2021). In contrast, female students typically exhibit lower rates of truancy, but when they do engage in such behaviour, it is often linked to emotional or relational issues. Girls are more likely to be absent from school due to family responsibilities (Olivier, et al., (2020), such as care giving, or due to relational problems, such as bullying or conflict with peers (Connelly & O'Connell, 2022). The research focuses on public secondary schools in Katsina state, Nigeria, a developing nation where additional data on adolescent truancy is needed (Shyngle et al. 2024).The factors predicting truant behaviour have not been thoroughly explored within Nigerian contexts, particularly among secondary school students. The cost and impact of severe truant behaviour are profound, with significant implications for the

youths involved. Truant behaviour does not only affect the individual, but also has long-term repercussions for families, schools, and the wider community.

Statement of the Problem

Punctuality is one of the basic requirements for effective teaching and learning for student to attain academic success. These requirements help to identify the importance of school attendance and it is intended to help in minimizing interference with classroom instruction. Unfortunately, due to lack of or inadequate attendance of students in school, they are ignorant of the consequences of this unpleasant behaviour. Truancy among students should be viewed with great concern as the country cannot move on with half-baked human resources. If students should become liability in the society as a result of truancy, then the overall national development would surely be hampered.

This problem does not seem to attract much attention from the authorities concerned and is therefore left to degenerate into a serious problem that may eventually affect the overall performance of students at that level. Information on the extent and nature of truancy in secondary schools are often based on records obtained from form/class master/mistress in class registers or attendance. But these records may be inadequate or almost incomplete and limit the understanding of the phenomenon, thus making it difficult to develop appropriate intervention strategies. More insight on how truancy manifests is needed to provide a base on which to suggest, plan and develop effective intervention strategies. Truancy is a major problem that is seriously affecting the overall success of the education in Nigeria particularly in Katsina state.

Studies have shown that the alarming rate of the effects of truancy as they manifest themselves in poor academic performance in secondary schools and birth of most of the antisocial behaviour and criminal acts in the larger society (Muhammed, 2019). Study conducted has recognized that truant students associate with bad friends who culminate into criminal activities such as stealing, smoking, cultism, narcotics, shoplifting etc. (Owen, 2001). There is increasing and worrying evidence that some truants spend their time engaging in antisocial activities such as drug taking, prostitution, joyriding, violence, involve in crimes etc (Ken, 2003). In addition, Musa (2014) explained that while the truant students are away from school, they exercise incense in engaging in a lot of juvenile delinquencies like fighting, drug abuse, stealing, among others. The situation has become highly

worrisome in the schools. It is against this background, therefore, that the state of problems in this study is to find out the truancy among secondary school students in Katsina State. Therefore, this study attempted to identify the problems in related to students' locus of control and suggest proper solutions with the hope of reducing it to the barest minimum.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate locus of control as predictor of truancy among public secondary school students in Katsina state, Nigeria

Specifically, the study intends to:

1. investigate the significant relationship between internal locus of control and truancy among public secondary school students in Katsina state, Nigeria.
2. examine the significant relationship between external locus of control and truancy among public secondary school students in Katsina State, Nigeria.
3. ascertain the gender difference in truancy among public secondary school students in Katsina State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated and tested in the study:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between internal locus of control and truancy among public secondary school students in Katsina State, Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between external locus of control and truancy among public secondary school students in Katsina State, Nigeria.

HO₃: There is no significant gender difference in truancy among public secondary school students in Katsina State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted correlational research design. The correlation design was used to examine the relationship that existed among the internal locus of control, external locus of control and truancy among public secondary school students in Katsina State, Nigeria. Correlational study is a quantitative method of research in which there are two or more quantitative variables from the same group or population are determined to see if there is a relationship between or among them (Creswell,

2012). The correlational research design was found to be appropriate, accurate for this study because it is used to establish the degree and nature of the relationship among a number of variables.

The population of the study consists of all public senior secondary school students across Katsina State. The students' population was three thousand six hundred and ninety-six (3,696) senior secondary school students. The sample of this study consists of three hundred and forty-six (346) students which were selected as sample for the study, which comprises of 180 male and 166 female students drawn from the entire population using the statistical table of Krejcie and Morgan (2006). The researcher used multi-stage cluster sampling techniques in order to obtain accurate representation, and to address the different characteristics of the entire students' population. There are twelve (12) Education Quality Assurance Zones (EQAZs) in Katsina state. The first stage of the research was to identify the three (3) senatorial districts. The second stage involves cluster sampling technique. The researcher grouped the educational zones alphabetically according to senatorial districts and were randomly selected, one from each grouped letters. Therefore, the third stage involved the uses of simple random sampling techniques to selected three (3) Education Quality Assurance Zones (EQZA) one from each senatorial district in the state. In the fourth stage, purposive sampling techniques were used to select four (4) schools from each zone. The schools are based on school types: one boys' only, one girls' only and two (2) mixed schools (co-education). In the fifth stage simple random sampling technique was used to select students (respondents) in each school. This justifies the use of simple random sampling technique because each member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample.

The two instruments used for data collection were the questionnaire. These are Locus of Control Questionnaire (LOCQ) was developed by Pettijohn (1992) and adopted for this research study, Students Truant Behaviour Questionnaire (STBQ) it instrument was developed by the researcher and the items were derived from reviewed literature. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A was designed to collect respondents' data such as the name of school, sex (male or female). Section B was Locus of Control Questionnaire (LOCQ) and Students Truant Behaviour Questionnaire (STBQ). Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion on modified four points Likert scale as Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1) points

The validity of the instrument was established by three (3) experts in the Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina state. These experts assessed the instruments for appropriateness and suitability to the study, and their suggestions were effected for correction(s). The face and content validation of the instrument was done. A pilot test of the questionnaire was carried on 25 students in a school which was not part of the real study sample. Test re-test reliability method was used to carry out with an interval of three weeks between the first and second administration of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was obtained after the pilot testing, using Cronbach Alpha Statistical analysis. The internal consistency reliability coefficient was 0.83 for Locus of Control Questionnaire (LOCQ) while 0.67 was obtained Students Truant Behaviour Questionnaire (STBQ).

The questionnaire was administered on public senior secondary school students (SSS II) directly by the researcher with the help of research assistants that were properly sensitized and trained on the purpose and nature of the study. The respondents were assured of confidentiality and were told that the responses would be strictly for research purpose only. The respondents were encouraged to seek for clarification before responding to the items in the test where necessary. The questionnaire was retrieved immediately, at the end of the exercise. The data collected were presented using descriptive statistics: simple tabular form, frequency and standard deviation and inferential statistic was used to analyzed data collected. In testing the null hypotheses, hypothesis 1 and 2 were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Statistics to obtained correlations among the variables. The hypothesis 4 was analyzed using t-test; data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Students Responses According to Gender

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	180	52%
Female	166	48%
Total	346	100%

Source: Researchers' field work, 2023.

The analysis on table 1 shows that out of 346 respondents, the male respondents have a total number of 180 with 52%, while the total number of female is 166 representing 48% respectively.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant relationship between internal locus of control and truancy among public secondary school students’ in Katsina state.

Table 2: r- value of internal locus of control and truancy

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r-value	P-value	Decision
Internal Locus of Control	346	42.91	8.37	344	0.430*	0.000	Rejected
Truancy	346	62.19	7.70				

*Correlation not significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result on table 14 shows that there is significant relationship between internal locus of control and truancy among public secondary school students in Katsina State. This indicates that r-value of 0.430 greater than critical r-value of 0.001 at the degree of freedom of 344 and tested at 0.05 significant level. Therefore, hypothesis is hereby rejected. Therefore, locus of control was significant in predicting students’ truancy.

Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant relationship between external locus of control and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Katsina state.

Table 3: r- value external locus of control and truancy

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r-value	P-value	Decision
External Locus of Control	346	16.80	0.97	344	-0.006	0.072	Accepted
Truancy	346	62.19	7.70				

*Correlation not significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result on table 15 shows that there is no significant relationship between external locus of control and truancy among public secondary school students in Katsina state. This shows negative value of r-value of -0.006, since p-value greater than p-value of 0.05 at the degree of freedom of 344. Therefore, hypothesis is hereby accepted. Therefore, external locus of control was not significantly found to have a capacity to predict students’ truancy.

Hypothesis Three:

There is no significant gender difference in truancy among public secondary school students' in Katsina state.

Table 4: t-test of Gender difference in Truancy

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Truancy	Male	180	50.07	5.39	344	-3.826	.110	Sig.
	Female	166	54.36	4.54				

Correlation significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result on table 15 shows that there is significant gender difference in truancy among public Senior Secondary School Students in Katsina State. This indicates that the Levene's T-test for equality of variance at which t-test value of -3.826 and p-value .110, since p-value is greater than 0.05 significant alpha level at 344 degree of freedom. Therefore, hypothesis is hereby rejected because there is significant difference in male and female in truancy among public senior secondary students in Katsina State. This indicates that male mean score of 50.07 is less than female counterpart of 54.36 in this study.

Discussion

From hypothesis one, the results of the study revealed that internal locus of control significantly related and predict truancy among public secondary school student. This result supported the findings of Tam-Shui (2014) which revealed that internal locus of control was used along with other variables to thoroughly explain truancy. In the same presentation, Onukwufor et al., (2015) agreed that, there is significant relationship between internal locus of control and truancy among public secondary school students. The findings of Tarn-Shui (2014) further suggest that negative experiences in school provide the context for truancy to occur. Results show that the truants reported poorer relations with teachers, a tendency of disbelieving in the value of schooling, and more frequent involvement in problem behaviour.

From hypothesis two, the result indicates negative significant relationship between external locus of control and truancy among secondary school students. The result is supported Onukwufor et al.,

(2015) established the fact that students with external locus of control are very likely to be a truant, so it is advised to always look inward in order to solve problems of truancy. In contrary to what was found in this study, Gbonee (2013) expressed that external locus of control consists of self-attitude characterized by the feeling that all that happens to the individual is the consequence of change, luck, fate and several others, all of which are forces and events beyond the individual's control. In the findings Tarn-Shui (2014), truants are likely to have little feelings that they can control their own fate, but the non-truants understand that outcomes are not entirely out of their own control. It appears that the truant students are less capable of dealing with their problems adequately, given an unfavourable evaluation of their social environment.

From hypothesis three, there is no significant gender difference in truancy among secondary school students' in Katsina state. The finding of this study is in support of Olivier, et al., (2020) who revealed that female students' truancy is frequently associated with internalizing behaviours, including anxiety and depression, which may lead to avoidance of school settings where these feelings are exacerbated. The finding is in tandem with Connelly and O'Connell, (2022) who's revealed that female students typically exhibit lower rates of truancy, but when they do engage in such behaviour it is often linked to emotional or relational issues. In contrary, the finding of Aqeel and Rehna, (2020) revealed that male students are more likely to engage in truant behaviour than their female counterparts.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that students' truancy among public senior secondary school (SSS II) students is significantly predicted by locus of control. Truancy among secondary school students in Katsina state was attributed to the effect of locus of control. Students' internal locus of control was not significantly predicting truancy, but the students' external locus of control is significantly correlated and predicts students' truancy. Gender difference is a factor responsible for truancy, efforts to assist truant students should be done by principals, school counsellors and form masters/mistress taking into account the mental, emotional, self-concept and personality aspects of the student in school by using counselling services.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of this study:

1. Automated computerized register could help to identify truant students, the lessons that are being missed or possible causes of truancy. Students may likely not to play truancy when they know that attendance is being closely monitored.
2. Parents should endeavour to visit their children and wards in their school without them being aware of such visits. This will go a long way to curb the incidence of truancy in the school.
3. School administrator, Guidance counsellors and Teacher need to use reactive and proactive approaches when dealing with truancy, whereby the parent of truant must be involve in finding a lasting solutions to this ugly act in school system.

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