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Truancy: Threat to Social Studies Pedagogy in Secondary School in Ebonyi State

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Abstract:

The study focused on truancy as a threat to the teaching of social studies in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. The objectives of the study are to investigate how socio-economic status of parents contribute to truant behaviour in the teaching of Social studies, find out how family location lead to truant behavior in the teaching of Social studies and investigate how condition of teachers lead to truant behavior in the teaching and learning of Social studies. The population of the study comprises of 250 teachers, student from the urban and rural areas of the state. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire developed through intensive literature review based on the objectives and research questions. The responses were analyzed using mean, and standard deviation. The findings of the study showed that socio-economic status of parents, location of residential buildings and condition of service of teachers lead to truant behaviour in the teaching of Social studies. Peer pressure and separation/divorce also lead to truant behaviour. Vandalism and involvement in gangs are some of the effects of truant behaviour. Based on these findings, some recommendations were made such as parents should build their residential houses in place where their wards will learn things that will make them good citizens, parents should not use their socio-economic status to encourage truancy among others.

Keywords: *Truancy, threat, social studies, pedagogy, behaviour*

1. Introduction

Education in Nigeria has been challenged by so many factors, some of which are traced to the class room. When a child, typically adolescent to teenage, misses more than the allowed number of days in school, such a child is regarded as a truant. Farrant (1999) gave credence to this truth that a truant is one who absents him/her self from classes, school, exhibits chronic misbehaviour in class room, challenges school authority, disrupts students who are anxious to work, embark on stealing, constantly come late to class and lessons among others. So an unpermitted behaviour and unexcused absence from school is considered truancy.

Lynn, Alvarez and Haynes (2015) observed that truancy has been recorded as a leading factor preventing children's success in school, graduation from school and inhibit their ability to become productive in a society. It is pertinent to note that school children should be properly guided, directed and empowered to imbibe the right kind of lifestyle and virtues that will enhance their lives and benefit the society where they live in. Such virtues should be handwork, dedication to their studies and embracing scholarship zeal.

There are so many causes of truancy among Nigerian school children today. Jim (2003) observed that truancy is a three few problems that stems from the child, family, school, and the community, which are the causes and contributing factors such as educational level of parents, socio-economic status of families, location of residence, financial problems and parents' academic background causes truancy. Other causes of truancy may include peer pressure, separation/divorce within the family, lack of academic skills, drug abuse/alcoholism by parents, low self esteem, among others. He also observed that no doubt those members if the lower class are somewhat educationally handicapped by virtue of their financial state and their inability to meet up with the financial demand of modern education. He also mentioned that poor parents are usually unable to provide the high cost of education for their children, thus predisposing them to truancy which is a serious menace to education in Nigeria today.

Laura (1992) noted that location of the family could lead to truancy in various ways. For instance, in the urban area, youths are exposed to a lot of foreign culture and civilization and this affects the traditional values adversely. Adamu (1998) observe that education level of parents can lead to truancy. Adamu (1998) also stated that many illiterate parents are known to aid and encourage their children to engage in nefarious activities like buying examination papers and forging certificates for their children. Heaviside (1995) opined that generally, truancy is highest in public schools. Most Nigerian parents, especially low income earners enroll their children in to public school which is affordable to them and less attention is given to care of the children and this has negative effect on both the student and the society at large. The cumulative effect of this actions is that students who are less cared for in their various schools do not bother to take their lessons seriously which bring about failure in class assignment, inability to do their home work,

decreasing their learning ability and involving in gangs, vandalism, dropping out of school etc. This poses a major challenge to education in Nigeria.

Ekpe (1995) stated that teachers contribute to truancy in schools. He observed that most teachers in Nigerian secondary schools are not punctual, not regular and do not live by example. He noted that some teachers embark on multiple businesses in order to make ends meet. Ekpe (1995) suggested that teachers should live by example and also see themselves as loco-parents. He added that teachers should put greater interest in organizing and supervising co-curriculum activities for students in secondary schools in Nigeria. Ogbonna (1993) suggested the need to improve the conditions of our schools and teachers because it will go a long way to reducing truancy on both teachers and students thereby improving the teaching pedagogy in secondary schools in Nigeria. This will ensure that students are prepared to succeed in school, and also make a successful transition from school to worklife and such will make education real to life, Ezegebe (1994). It is based on these opinions and reports that the researcher seeks to find out how truancy is a threat to the teaching of social studies in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. The problem of this study therefore is how does truancy constitute a threat to the teaching of Social Studies pedagogy in Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State?

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to find out how truancy is a threat to the teaching of social studies in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. Specifically, the study is design to:

1. Investigate how socio- economic status of parents contributes to truant behavior in the learning of social studies in Ebonyi state.
2. Find out how family location contributes to truant behaviour in the teaching of social studies in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.
3. Investigate how conditions of service of teachers lead to truant behaviour in the teaching of Social studies in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

1.2. Research Questions

Three research questions were formulated to guide this study thus:

1. How does socio-economic status of parents lead to truant behavior in the learning of social studies in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.
2. How does family location lead to truant behavior in the teaching of Social studies in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.
3. How does teachers condition of service lead to truant behaviour in the teaching of Social studies in Ebonyi state.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Anyone who does not conform to the pre-determined rules and regulations of the school is a truant. There is a serious concern about rising cases of truancy in secondary school in Nigeria. This study will be of great benefit to secondary education board, policy makers, and curriculum planners. This is because the findings of this study will be used through a well articulated program of education to help improve the conditions of our schools. This will help to restore order, concentration and discipline, particularly among the youths who have become submerged in deviant behavioural practice, which at the same time trying to develop and preserve a distinct Ebonyi personality. When the result of this study is made available, it will be used in teaching the youths the right value and attitude necessary for effective teaching and learning of Social studies.

The findings of this study is also hoped to influence the programme of teacher education and consequent Social studies curriculum for the schools. The implication of this is that curriculum planners and implementers will find this result useful in their attempt to inculcate the right values in the content area of Social studies. The policy makers will use the findings of this study as a guide in developing the right modality to handling truant behaviours.

2. Methodology

2.1. Design of the Study

This study adopted a survey research design. Survey research design was considered by Gay (1981) and Uzoagulu (1998) as useful in studying a variety of problems involving data collection for either answering research questions or testing hypothesis. Gay (1981) further noted that survey design permits the description of conditions as they exist in their natural setting.

2.2. Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Ebonyi state. Ebonyi state is made up of three (3) Education zones which are Abakaliki, Afikpo and Onueke. The researcher chose to study Ebonyi state because he resides there and is conversant with the language and terrain of the area.

2.3. Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all social studies teachers and students in the three (3) education zones in Ebonyi state which is made up of 250. This indicates exact number of teachers and social studies student in Ebonyi state (Source: Ebonyi State Secondary Education Board 2014)

2.4. Sample and Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. The sample was used for the study because of the heterogeneous nature of the State as informed by Nwana (1981), when he said that if however, the phenomenon is known to exhibit little variability, a low sample percentage drawn from the population will give a reasonable, reliable and valid results. The number of teachers from the three zones =150, the number of students from Abakaliki urban = 20, the number of students from Onueke Urban =20, the number of students from Abakaliki Rural (Oferekpe) = 20, the number of students from Afikpo rural (Itim Edda) = 10, the number of students from Onueke rural (Etam) = 20. Total number of both teachers and students =250.

2.5. Validation of the Instrument

Face validation of the instrument was presented to two experts in the field of social studies and one lecturer in Measurement and Evaluation at Ebonyi state University Abakaliki. These lecturers vetted each item in terms of sentence structure and adequacy of the instrument was modified suit the study. The Cronbach Alpha reliability was used. Reliability coefficient of 0.72 was indicated showing high reliability.

2.6. Method of Data Analysis

The three research questions were answered on individual item basis using mean and standard deviation. The mean of 2.5 and above was used as a cut off point for agree while 2.4 and below was used for disagree.

Item No	Item focus	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
1	Parents buy examination questions for their ward	2.6	1.11	Agree
2	Parents give money for snacks to their ward	2.5	1.19	Agree
3	Parents give money to their wards to watch films	2.7	1.14	Agree
4	Parents buy corrupt films and pornographic books	2.6	1.15	Agree
5	Parents over pamper their ward	2.6	1.14	Agree
6	Parents pay for special centers in exams	2.5	1.16	Agree
7	Parents stay away from home for a long time because of business	2.6	1.17	Agree

Table 1: students' response on how socio-economic status constitute to truancy

Table 1 Above revealed that the respondents accepted that all the items contribute to truant behaviors in learning Social studies in secondary schools.

Item No	Item focus	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
8	parents reside in ghetto areas	2.6	1.18	Agree
9	parents live close to motor parks	2.7	1.17	Agree
10	parents live close to cinema house	2.5	1.19	Agree
11	parents live close to brothels	2.5	1.14	Agree
12	parents live close to schools	2.5	1.12	Agree
13	parents live in rural areas	2.6	1.16	Agree

Table 2: Students' response on the influence of location on truant behaviour

Table two above revealed that the respondents accepted that all the items significantly lead to truant behaviours in the learning of Social studies.

Item No	Item focus	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
14	Teachers engage in part time business	2.6	1.17	Agree
15	Teachers engage in part time teaching	2.5	1.19	Agree
16	Teachers do not do their job conscientiously	2.6	1.19	Agree
17	Teachers aid and abet exam malpractice	2.5	1.12	Agree
18	Teachers engage in full time programmes	2.6	1.10	Agree
19	Teachers engage in part time programmes	2.6	1.06	Agree
20	Teachers collect bribe from students	2.6	1.18	Agree
21	Teachers are not paid hazard allowances	3.4	1.11	Agree
22	Teachers are not paid as and when due	3.1	1.12	Agree
23	Government treat teachers anyhow	3.8	1.08	Agree

Table 3: Responses of teachers on the influence of condition of service on truant behaviour

Table 3 above revealed that the respondents accepted that all the items significantly contribute to truant behavior in the teaching of Social studies.

3. Discussion of Findings

The study investigated truancy as a threat to teaching of Social studies in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. The findings revealed that socio-economic status of parents contribute to truant behaviours as seen in all the items in table 1. In line with the proponents of the socio-economic theory, Laura (1992) observed that since money and materialism acts as a panacea for one's position in the society, people on the lower ladder of the society resort to crime in order to sustain their lives and such tendency affect value in children negatively. Laura (1992) also observed that many literate parents are known to aid and encourage their children to engage in nefarious activities like buying examination papers and forging certificates. The cumulative effect of these actions is that students will not bother to take their lessons seriously. They rather embark on truant behaviours knowing that their parents are there to solve their problems. These acts invariably pose a challenge to education and the teaching of Social studies.

The study shows that location contribute to truant behaviours and this is in line with Laura (1992) who observed that location of the family could lead to truancy in various ways. For instance, in urban areas, youths are exposed to a lot of foreign culture and civilization and these affect the traditional values adversely and this also challenges the teaching of Social studies. Also, children who live close to motor parks often engage in petty trading and this affect their academic pursuit, (Laura,1992). He also observed that in the rural areas where students trek some kilometers away from their homes, most of them will end up on the way without arriving at school and this pose a threat to Social studies pedagogy. The succinct implication is that most students do not take their studies seriously and this affects their performance in school examinations. From the study, it was disclosed that teachers condition of service contribute to truancy in the teaching of social studies. Thus, in agreement with Ekpe (1995) who stated that teachers are not punctual, not regular and do not live by example. He also observed that most teachers embark on multiple businesses in order to make ends meet. He observed that most teachers engage in part and full time programmes. Teachers will be dedicated to their duties if good working condition is created. Egbezor (2005) observed that dedication to duty is a function of job satisfaction and job satisfaction here refers to the extent to which personal wants, both materially and psychologically are realized by the individual while performing a task. A classroom teacher who derives satisfaction from his job should pay attention to the rudiments that are necessary for bringing about productivity in his teaching. Only such teacher can pay attention to the needs of the students and handle them appropriately.

3.1. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Parents should not use their socio-economic status to encourage truancy.
2. Parents should build their residential houses in places where their children will learn things that will make them to be good children both to their families and to the society.
3. Government should review teachers' condition of service so as to enhance their status in the society.

3.2. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, these conclusions were made.

1. Parents should not build their residential houses around hotels, cinema houses because it contributes to truancy among youths.
2. Provisions should be made by government for students with truant behavior and learning disabilities so as to encourage them to take up other career in the areas of their interest.
3. The government should improve on teacher's condition of service by granting them study leave, paying them as and when due. This will go a long way to discourage truancy among teachers. It will also thereby enhance performance in the teaching of Social studies in particular and teachers' productivity in general.

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