

How truancy affects students performance

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



Against the backdrop of recent mass failures in National Examination Council (NECO) and West African Examination Council (WAEC) examinations, Taiwo Olanrewaju and Rosemary Akano report on one of the causes of the failure. It was about 11a. m. and these reporters were rushing to work when a young boy of about 13-years ran after her, shouting “ aunty, aunty” to attract her attention. She stopped, wondering what the matter could be. The unkempt boy ran to meet up with her and begged her for money to feed. Our reporter asked so many questions at the same time and discovered that the boy had run away from home for some time and had not had a bath for some weeks. His story his mother had separated from his father and remarried. He wanted to go to school but his father chose a vocation mechanic apprenticeship for him. He said he was put in the care of a muslim cleric but because he had exhausted his feeding allowance, he was on the street begging for money. The lady gave the boy an option — to be taken home or be returned to the cleric. The boy was eventually reunited with his family members who claimed that that was not his first time of running away from home or would be brought back. Like the 13-year-old (names withheld), who has made it an habit to run away from home, his Quranic and training schools, it has become a trend nowadays for students, especially those in secondary schools to stay away from school. Truancy it is called. According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, truancy is any intentional unauthorised absence from compulsory schooling. The term typically describes absences caused by students of their own free will, and usually does not refer to legitimate “ excused” absences, such as ones related to medical conditions. But the term’s exact meaning differs from school to school, and is usually

explicitly defined in the school's handbook of policies and procedures. It has no relation to homeschooling, although sometimes parents who practice home schooling have been charged with this. It may also refer to students who attend school but do not go to classes. This worldwide phenomenon is a cankerworm that has been destroying many students, irrespective of gender. It has rendered so many useless, with the cumulative effects on their families and even countries. Truancy has turned many students into failures, leading to inability to succeed in both internal and external examinations. In some schools abroad, truancy may result in ineligibility to graduate or to receive credit for classes attended, until the time lost to truancy is made up through a combination of detention, fines, or summer school. But unfortunately in Nigeria, there is no penalty for it and neither are there handbooks of policies and procedures in schools. Why play truancy? Some students stay away from school for several reasons, including family's poor standard of living, whereby parents cannot provide necessities of life for their children. Such students would not want to be in the class so as to avoid embarrassment from teachers and even their peers. Autism has prevented some other students from being present in the school. Other students engage in truancy because of selfish interests or bad influence from peer groups. In fact, this particular case presents the most common factor, causing about 50 per cent of students not making themselves available in school. Some prefer partying, preferring to spend time in parties, visiting their boyfriends, sugar mummies and playstations instead of being in classrooms engaging in useful activities. The most painful thing is that so many times, their parents might not know what their wards have been up to

and even when they know, they could do little or nothing to make amend. Years back, a student was in discussion with the Nigerian Tribune on what his life had turned to because of truancy, he said truancy had set him backward. According to him, since he was in the junior class in the secondary school, he was missing classes on several occasions without genuine reasons. He said sometimes, he would be present in the school, adding that even if he was present in the morning, he would not wait till the closing time, a reason he was unable to pass his Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination, which caused him to repeat the same class. Despite his failure, he was in the act until his father became aware of what was happening to him. Steps taken by his father to correct his habit were to no avail. By the time he realised he was wasting his time, his foundation was already faulty and he could no longer pursue his education. According to Mrs Victoria Akano, an assistant headmistress of a primary school in Ogun State, “truancy is a three-fold problem. There are factors stemming from the child and parents, the school and the community. Actually the reasons a student misses school depend on the age and circumstances of each student. ” Sometimes, a student skips school because he or she feels unsafe at school, or on the way to or from school. Other students may miss school because of family issues, financial demands, or mental health problems. Factors contributing to truancy commonly stem from three core areas: school, family and community. Characteristics within all these areas will have a heavy impact on truancy rate. [Mrs Victoria Akano] Mrs Victoria Akano Mrs Akano said bad influence is one of the common causes of truancy and disruptive behaviour in children “ Also, personal matters contribute to the issues,

individual factors related to child truancy include lack of self-esteem, social skills, confidence, poor peer relations, low academic ability, lack of concentration, special need and self management skills. " The principal of Asegun Group of Schools, Mr Adewuyi Adeniran, in his reaction to truancy said, " As regards the child, truancy may be caused as a result of poor self esteem, poor academic performance, particularly lagging behind in reading and Mathematics, social isolation, poor inter-personal skills, feeling of not belonging at school (i. e of being different), feeling of lack of control over life (i. e no matter how hard I try I will not succeed), little or no extra-curricular involvement, language barrier (i. e language impairment and lacking of temerity to talk or having phobia for crowd). " According to a parent who doesn't want his name in print, to a larger extent, the child or children are not to blame, it is the duty of parents to monitor their children and know the performance of each child. He said the issue is not all about the school but the student because each child makes a school. School is an environment, even those who have highest scores in UTME, NECO and WAEC are not from the best schools, so it is all about the parents and the child. Parents should advise their children and help them channel their lives. Speaking with the Nigerian Tribune in his office, at the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Dr. Segun Adedeji described truancy as the non attendance of academic activities which he said was prevalent among secondary school students. He however noted that there was no way such behaviour would not impact negatively on the students' academic performance. The senior lecturer in Economics of Education said the moral upbringing of students also mattered as being

emphasised at the University of Ibadan, adding that students who lacked proper home training and good character, “ who are out there doing what they are not supposed to do are also truants. “ My heart bleeds when I find students who are supposed to be in the classroom learning, roaming the streets at 9am, 10am or even 12noon. " One important aspect the lecturer clamoured needed attention was to do a problem diagnosis, that is, to find out why the standard of education is falling, what is the root cause and why students are not interested in studying. “ If it is the free education of 1980 that has caused the problem, then the government should be ready to find a solution. I am not saying that free education is not good, but a monitoring team should be in place. " To him, truancy is not a holistic problem on its own, rather, what is happening in the nation is a systemic failure—a situation where students are not interested in learning, teachers are not interested in teaching and governments are not interested in finding out why.

Reminiscing, Dr, Adedeji said the fear of school inspectors did not encourage students to play truancy in his school days and also, parents were up and doing. But parents of today are too busy. They don't care whether their wards attend classes or not. They feel paying school fees is the ultimate", he added. He said teachers also have their problems, struggling with salary while some of them are not trained, they are stop-gap teachers. “ Thereby leaving the students on their own. Neither the parents nor the teachers are there for the students and that structure will definitely affect their academic performance, " he added. The educationist lamented the fact that parents engage in examination malpractices for their children; they enrol them in schools in villages and engage the services of mercenaries for

them. Way out: Since truancy results from problems in the family, the school, and the community, if a reduction is to be made, the participation of family, school and community would be required in the mediation efforts. Victoria, a student, said, schools in most cases, should keep a close contact with the police to combat truancy. Most schools, who have a nearby police station which have vehicles monitoring the area around the school grounds should look for and arrest truant students. “ Now, that we are in the computer age, schools management is to implement a system whereby if students are not marked as being present, the school computers will automatically text the parents of the child to notify them of their child’s absence. The way out of the academic rot according to Dr. Adedeji is to have a complete re-orientation. “ Let us identify where we have gone wrong. There can’t be a concrete solution without a proper identification of the problem. We need to get to the root of the problem. " He, however, urged everybody-students, teachers, parents and governments, to embrace discipline. “ If we are disciplined, we will obey laid down rules and regulations and that will be a step in the direction of solving our problems, " he said.