

Attendance Dilemma and its Effects on the Academic Performance of Secondary Schools' Students in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Worried by the dwindling academic performance of students in the various national examinations in Nigeria in recent times, this study examined the causes of attendance challenge and their impact on the academic performance of Secondary Schools' students in Osun State of Nigeria. To achieve this aim, scores in attendance and examinations for 3,050 students in the last three years were collected from 61 state-owned Secondary Schools out of a total of 208 Schools in the State. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested in this respect while descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were adopted for the analysis. The results indicated that the average attendance scores of students across the ten constituencies in the state are proportional to their examination scores. Also, parents/guardians ranked poverty level ($M = 3.96$), unbearable extra fees imposed on students by the school authority ($M = 3.95$) and high cost of instructional materials ($M = 3.93$) as major significant causes for their wards' absenteeism at school. The results of Chi-square value ($\chi^2_{cal} = 26.35 > \chi^2_{tab} = 7.32$) for the test of hypothesis showed that a significant relationship exists between class attendance and academic performance of Secondary School students in the study area. It was concluded that a mechanism should be put in place by the State Government to curb the extra fees being charged by the various school authorities.*

Keywords: *Attendance dilemma; academic performance; Effects; Osun State; Secondary Schools; students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The challenge of attendance of students of Secondary Schools in the country, especially at the rural areas has been a persistent issue. In most cases, many of these students come late to schools in the morning. While many of them participate in collective worship at assembly, they leave schools before closing hours for other unauthorized activities and in some cases too, a handful number of these students will not even bother to come to school (Fagbenle, 2008). Though this absenteeism being exhibited by the Secondary School students may be with genuine reasons, majority of them displayed this attitude for no condonable reasons (White, 1980; cited in Fagbenle, 2008).

Attendance has been defined as the physical presence of the students in schools/classes. Good (1973) explained further that attendance at schools is not merely being bodily present but including actual participation in the work and activities of the school. Attendance can be divided into two extremes of being 'a mere appearance of the students at school' and 'the students present during the whole day'. Though some students may truly be at the assembly during the collective worship period and leave school before the closing hour after the row might have been called in the morning. In some cases, some of these students may truly be in school and but rather engage themselves in illegal activities such as sleeping, reading negatively motivated novels, playing with electronic devices (handsets, androids, ipads, ipods, etc) and going to the field to play games among others (Rogers, 1980).

Tyerman (1968; cited in Fagbenle, 2008) identified two types of attendance as regular attendance and irregular attendance. According to the author, regular attendance is characterized as being present, punctual and being involved in the activities of the school. The regular students will

always come to school except for some certain reasons beyond their control which may probably be sickness, death or accident which are regarded as legal absenteeism in the dictionary of education. On the other hand, irregular attendance for whatever causes is a distress call. It can therefore be described as a deliberate absenteeism of oneself from school for no just cause. Good (1973) further described irregular attendance as a failure of the students to be physically present in the school for reasons that are not recognized by the school authority as legitimate. This may be in form of absence, truancy, illegal works such as being in the family's farm or being compelled by their mothers to stay at home to take care of babies.

According to Hargrove (1987) and woods (1994; cited in Iyamu and Obiunu, 2006), the effects of attendance dilemma/absenteeism in our schools have been identified. They include: academic underachievement which increases costs wastage; difficulty in making friends which could lead to boredom, loss of confidence and engagement in premature sexual activities which could lead to pregnancy resulting in dropout and stress among young careers. The society suffers as the children of school age hang around in the streets intimidating other people and stealing properties of those who are in school other place of work (Davidson *et al.*, 2003). Attendance dilemma could also result into poor academic achievements, loss of friends and partners, disruption in class when absentees return to school, difficulty in keeping accurate records, reduced ability to meet instructional targets and damaged school reputations (Oghuvbu, 2006 and 2010). Oghuvbu (2010) studied the attendance and academic performance of Secondary School students in Delta State, Nigeria and concluded that there is a fair positive correlation between attendance and academic performance. It was also revealed that academic performance is influenced by attendance in Secondary Schools in the study area. Iyamu and Obiunu (2006) reflected on the dilemma of Primary School attendance in Nigeria and summed up that education in Africa/Nigeria is encumbered by the poverty level of individuals in this region.

The main aim of this study was therefore to investigate the causes of attendance dilemma in the Secondary Schools in Osun State of Nigeria and find the effects of such menace in the society. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set.

- 1) To identify the causes of absenteeism in Secondary Schools in Nigeria, with a special emphasis on Osun State.
- 2) To examine the relationships between attendance and academic performance of Secondary School students in the study area.
- 3) To examine the effects of attendance dilemma on individual academic performance in study area.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study.

- 1) There is no significant relationship between attendance and academic performance of Government-owned Secondary Schools students in Osun State.
- 2) School-related, community-related and family-related factors do not significantly influence the relationship between attendance and academic performance of Secondary Schools students in the study area.

The Study Area

Osun State is located in the southwestern part of Nigeria and it was created in October, 1992 by the General Ibrahim Babangida Military Administration. It is a Yoruba speaking region and the people there are predominantly farmers, traders and civil servants. It is bounded in the north by Kwara State, in the east partly by Ekiti State and partly by Ondo State, in the west by Oyo State and in the south by Ogun State. The state has thirty local government areas and one area office at Modakeke-Ife. It is also divided into ten constituencies which are: Irepodun/Olorunda/Oshogbo/Orolu; Ife Central/East/North/South; Ede North/South/Egbedore/Ejigbo; Ife Federal Constituency; Ayedire/Iwo/Ola-Oluwa; Odo-Otin/Ifelodun/Boriye; Boluwaduro/Ifedayo/Illa; Atakunmosa East/Atakunmosa West; Obokun/Oriade; and, Ayedaade/Irewole/Isokan. The people of Osun State are well learned and this accounts for its second largest position among the 36 states in Nigeria in terms of Universities

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location. It has 208 Government-owned Secondary Schools across the state. The state is of mixed religions (Christians, Moslems and traditional worshippers) and it is one of the most peaceful states in Nigeria.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The population for the study were the public (state owned) Secondary Schools in Osun State of Nigeria. Two Secondary Schools were picked from each of the thirty local governments in the state and one school from the area office in Modakeke-Ife. This brought the total number of schools covered in the study area to sixty one (61). This was then stratified into constituency areas for ease of administration. 50 students were randomly selected from each of the sixty one surveyed Secondary Schools and which summed up to 3050 students across the state. The decision for this sample size was premised on the need to have an in-depth study of the coverage area. In a similar manner, 915 teachers were randomly selected schools. That is, fifteen teachers from each of the sixty one surveyed schools.

A checklist was designed to collect students' attendance scores and their academic performances for the last three years. Research assistants with relative research knowledge in the study area were employed for the data collection. The design for the study was ex-post-facto in nature while descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used for the analysis. The tools include means, ranks and Chi-square tests. The attendance records and average scores in the class tests/examinations for each of the students for the past three years were taken in this regard. The average attendance for each of the students was got by using the modified formula by Oghuvbu (2010):

Total No of time student was present for the period

Total No of time School opened for the period.

Households (Parents/Guardians) in the selected towns and villages were also visited to elicit information via questionnaire design and direct interviews on the possible factors responsible for the dwindling school attendance in their locality. The instrument had four-point scale of: very significant (VS); significant (S); slightly significant (SS); and not significant (NS). To answer research question No. 2, the responses of the respondents (parents/guardians, students and teachers) were weighted and the mean scores for each of the factors were computed. For decisions, the mid-value of the scale, which is 2.5, was taken as the hypothetical cut-off point (Iyamu and Obiunu, 2006). That is, the addition of the exact lower limit of the scale (0.05) and the exact upper limit (4.50), then divided by two.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results in Table 1 indicated that the average attendance score per student hovers between 54.73 and 64.44 while their corresponding academic scores were between 57.86 and 64.75 respectively. Ife Central/East/North/South had the highest average attendance score (64.63) and this was followed by Ife Federal Constituency (64.44) and Ede North/South/Egbedore/Ejigbo (61.00). The same trend was observed in the average academic scores with the values of 64.75, 63.08 and 61.87 respectively. This could be traced to the urban nature of some of the towns in these constituencies and the proximity of tertiary institutions in these towns which serve as a source of motivation to the students/parents. The results also indicated that attendance at schools influences to some extent the academic performance of these students. These corroborated the findings of Oghuvbu (2010) that attendance influences the academic performance of Secondary School students in Delta state, Nigeria.

Table 1. Average Score in Attendance Score and Academic Performance according to Constituency

S/N	Constituency (Zone)	Total Score in Attendance	Total Score in Examinations	Total No of Students	Average Attendance Score	Average Academic Score
1.	Irepodun/Oloruda/Oshogbo/Orolu	21,890	23,142	400	54.73	57.86

2.	Ife Central/East/North/South	25,851	25,898	400	64.63	64.75
3.	Ede North/South/Egbedore/Ejigbo	24,401	24,746	400	61.00	61.87
4.	Ife Federal Constituency	16,110	15,770	250	64.44	63.08
5.	Ayedire/Iwo/Ola-Oluwa	18,295	18,413	300	60.98	61.38
6.	Odo-Otin/Ifelodun/Boripe	18,002	18,106	300	60.01	60.35
7.	Boluwaduro/Ifedayo/Illia	17,939	18,042	300	59.80	60.14
8.	Atakunmosa East/Atakunmosa West	11,790	11,990	200	58.95	59.95
9.	Obokun/Oriade	12,068	12,006	200	60.34	60.03
10.	Ayedaade/Irewole/Isokan	17,992	18,212	300	59.97	60.71
	Total	181,532	185,663	3050	598.43	608.46
	Overall Mean				59.84	60.85

Source: Field Analysis (2014)

Inferential results of the test of hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between attendance and academic performance of Secondary School students in the study area are summarized in Table 2. The results showed that the calculated Chi-square value ($\chi^2_{cal} == 26.35$) is quite higher than the tabulated value ($\chi^2_{tab} == 7.32$), hence the result is significant. This therefore supports the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between class attendance and academic performance of Secondary School students in Osun State of Nigeria. This lends credence to the works of Malcolm (2003; cited in Fagbenle (2008), Iyamu and Obiunu (2006) and Oghuvbu (2010) that there is a positive correlation between class attendance and academic performance.

Table 2. Chi-square Test Results on Relationship between Attendance Score and Academic Performance of Secondary Schools' Students

Variable	X^2_{cal}	DF	X^2_{tab}	P-value	Sig.
Relationship between Attendance and Academic Performance	26.35	3	7.32	0.00	S*

Source: Field Analysis (2014)

The analysis of data in Table 3 indicated that 19, 20 and 16 out of the 22 factors enumerated on the questionnaire were significant for the parents/guardians, students and teachers respectively. Table 3 further showed that the parents' most pertinent factor militating against their wards' attendance in schools is their poverty level (Mean = 3.96). This was further attributed to the unbearable extra fees being charged on their wards by the school authority (Mean = 3.95) and the high cost of instructional materials in the various schools (Mean = 3.93). This supports the views

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of Iyamu and Obiunu (2006) that education in Africa/Nigeria is hampered by the poverty level of individuals. Students on the other hand attributed their attendance dilemma on the need to attend to domestic works at home ($M = 3.99$), inability to complete the given excessive homework (Mean = 3.97), coupled with too much class tests (Mean = 3.96). The domestic works include taking care of their junior ones especially the babies, cloths and car washing, hawking, etc. It is therefore not uncommon to find such students sleeping in the class and not concentrating because of overwork at home. This corroborated the views of Roger (1980) and Fagbenle (2008) that engaging students in excessive domestic works prior to school's day works may dwindle the students' academic performance at school.

Teachers' findings are also in tandem with the parents' main significant factor responsible for students' absence in the class (parent's poverty level, Mean = 3.84) and they also share the same sentiment with the students on the need to attend to domestic works at home (mean = 3.84) while distance factor between school's location and the place of abode was rated third by the teachers ($M = 3.77$). Other facts and figures on the responses of the three categories of respondents are as contained in the table. However, there was a consensus of opinions among parents and students that education is still accorded its priority, notwithstanding the various distractions in the society such as materialism, get-rich-quickly syndrome and high rate of graduate unemployment. The effects of attendance dilemma, according to the findings, may include poor standard of education, premature sexual activities thereby leading to unwanted pregnancies/babies, school drop-outs, armed robbery activities, kidnapping, students hanging around the streets aimlessly, inferiority complex among peers, high rate of commercial Okada (Bike) riders among youths and other social vices. This is in line with the findings of Oghuvbu (2006 and 2010) and Fagbenle (2008).

The results of Table 3 therefore provided answers to the second hypothesis. Since 19, 20 and 16 of the 22 enumerated factors were found significant for the parents/guardians, students and teachers respectively, the null hypothesis was discarded in this regard. That is, school-related, community-related and family-related factors significantly influence the relationship between class attendance and academic performance of Secondary School students in Osun State, Nigeria.

Table 3. Perception of Factors Militating against Secondary Schools' Attendance in Osun State

S/N	Factors	Parents/Guardians			Students			Teachers			All Respondents		
		Mean	Rank	Dec	Mean	Rank	Dec	Mean	Rank	Dec	Mean	Rank	Dec
1.	Perennial illness	3.59	13	S	2.75	19	S	3.34	10	S	3.22	15	S
2.	Lack of interest	2.37	21	NS	3.63	9	S	3.73	1	S	3.24	14	S
3.	Slow assimilation in the class	3.61	12	S	2.59	20	S	2.46	18	NS	2.89	19	S
4.	Utilization of the School period to work for money	2.55	19	S	3.71	8	S	3.70	2	S	3.32	10	S
5.	High cost of instructional materials	3.93	3	S	3.86	7	S	2.41	19	NS	3.40	8	S
6.	Unbearable extra fees imposed on students by the	3.95	2	S	3.90	6	S	2.58	17	NS	3.48	6	S

	School authority												
7.	Parents' poverty level	3.96	1	S	3.91	5	S	3.66	3	S	3.84	1	S
8.	Low values for education among parents	2.31	22	NS	2.41	22	S	3.63	4	S	2.78	20	S
9.	The need to attend to religious activities	2.61	18	S	2.87	18	S	2.62	16	S	2.69	21	S
10.	Unfriendly attitudes of teachers and School authority	2.89	17	S	3.61	10	S	2.29	22	NS	2.93	18	S
11	Too much homework and class tests	3.81	9	S	3.96	3	S	2.39	20	NS	3.39	9	S
12.	Inclement weather condition	3.87	7	S	3.53	11	S	3.59	5	S	3.66	5	S
13.	Disruption in School Calendar owing to incessant strike actions by the teachers	3.75	10	S	3.50	12	S	2.71	15	S	3.32	10	S
14.	Need to attend to domestic works at home	3.92	4	S	3.99	1	S	3.58	6	S	3.83	2	S
15.	Boring School Curriculum	3.69	11	S	3.43	13	S	2.35	21	NS	3.16	16	S
16.	Standing parental order not to mingle with peers at School	2.42	20	NS	2.43	21	NS	2.89	14	S	2.58	22	S
17.	Inability to complete the given excessive homework	3.90	5	S	3.97	2	S	3.35	11	S	3.74	4	S
18.	Classmates' unfriendly	3.11	16	S	3.37	14	S	3.28	12	S	3.25	13	S

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	attitudes												
19.	Distance factor between Schools' location and place of abode	3.89	6	S	3.93	4	S	3.49	7	S	3.77	3	S
20.	Inability to cope with the series of class tests and examinations	3.22	14	S	3.26	15	S	3.46	8	S	3.31	12	S
21.	High level of graduates unemployment in the country	3.20	15	S	2.99	17	S	3.01	13	S	3.07	17	S
22.	General insecurity in the country.	3.83	8	S	3.15	16	S	3.42	9	S	3.48	6	S

Note: S = Significant; NS = Not Significant; Dec = Decision

Source: Field Analysis (2014)

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study had examined some of the causes of attendance dilemma among Secondary School students in Osun State and its effects on academic performance. The study showed that a fair positive correlation exists between students' attendance scores (Overall Mean = 59.84) and their academic scores (Overall Mean = 60.85). The study further revealed that parents' poverty level coupled with the unbearable extra fees being imposed on students by the school authority and high cost of instructional materials are the three most significant causes of attendance dilemma (challenge) among students. Students on the other hand attributed the need to attend to domestic works at home and the inability to complete the given excessive homework as the most significant factors affecting their attendance dwindling at school. It was also revealed that 19, 20 and 16 out of the 22 factors perceived to be responsible for students' attendance challenge were significant for the parents/guardians, students and teachers respectively.

Towards ameliorating the challenge of attendance among this category of students however, Government should curb all unauthorized extra fees being charged by the various schools' authorities. Parents should also be re-oriented on the need for prompt release of their wards for schooling activities. Moreover, the state's constituted law enforcement agents (O-Marshal) should further intensify efforts towards apprehending any student found roaming about the streets during official school hours.

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