

CLASS SKIPPING AS A HIDDEN CAUSE OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN LAGOS STATE PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR VALUE REORIENTATION

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Abstract

Class skipping is a hidden deviant behaviour in schools, especially in public secondary schools. Many researchers have focused on absenteeism and truancy, but class skipping is more dangerous because it includes the attributes of absenteeism, truancy, and many other undesirable deviant behaviours. Its danger includes breeding and nurturing recruits for touts and cultists and being a source of producing agents of insecurity if not addressed. This study aimed to establish the prevalence of class skipping in Lagos State public secondary schools and ascertain its relationship with juvenile delinquent behaviours. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The sample consisted of one hundred and eighty-eight participants (45.9% male and 54.1% female), out of which one hundred and twenty-two (122) were students and fifty-nine (59) were teachers in Lagos State public secondary schools. A random sampling technique was used to select study participants from all six education districts. The participants came from eighty-four (84) secondary schools—twenty-three (23) Junior Secondary Schools and sixty-one (61) Senior Secondary Schools. A self-developed questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Class-Skipping as a Hidden Threat for Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos State Public Secondary Schools," vetted with face validity by a test and evaluation expert in the Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, was used as the instrument for collecting data. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher, who employed research assistants. The questionnaire was analysed using percentage. The study revealed that out of an average classroom of 50-100 students, there was an average of 1-5 class skippers. Class skipping might cause juvenile delinquent behaviours in Lagos State public schools, and there is a possibility of rehabilitating the class skippers. Therefore, a full-time professional counsellor should be employed and assigned to each secondary school in Nigeria to achieve Sustainable Development Goals four education for all.

Keywords: Class-skipping, Juvenile delinquent behaviours

Introduction

Class-skipping is another term used for students cutting classes in schools. It is the behaviour exhibited by some students who come to school but avoid attending lessons in the

classrooms, opting to stay in areas such as toilets, empty classrooms, and other hideouts. This behaviour significant has been recurring in schools in Lagos State. Students engage in this act for various reasons, but some scholars (Taiwo & Dada, 2021) opine that a lack of school connectedness is a significant cause of class skipping. Therefore, Class-skippers are described as students who attend school for one reason or another but do not attend classes. The subject teachers' class attendance register is marked absent. However, they are either present or absent in the primary school register, depending on when the class teacher marks the attendance register. The act of class skipping is often associated with various disciplinary acts and juvenile crimes, including truancy, bullying, arriving late to school, abusing other students and staff, stealing, hooliganism, street fights, and disrupting the tone of the school (Taiwo & Dada, 2023).

Khuluqo and Sumedi, 2016 describe juvenile delinquency as encompassing all public wrongs and different violations of legal and social norms committed by young people between the ages of 12 and 20. The association of juvenile crimes and disciplinary acts with class skipping makes it pertinent for researchers to study the relationship between class skipping and juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. Patel, Parashram, and Vairagi (2023) ascertained the high delinquency rate among secondary school adolescents in India and suggested intervention strategies as a positive role in curbing unacceptable behaviour.

The state of the country's insecurity and terrorist acts attracts many researchers to study the causes and solutions to insecurity in Nigeria (Egbofo & Salihu, 2014; Badejo, Obadofin, & Benedette, 2019). Insecurity linked acts of disobedience and deviant behaviours perpetrated by secondary school students (Taiwo & Dada, 2023). Ambrose (2018) opines that deviant behaviours in public schools in Nigeria pose severe threats and identifies the effects of deviant behaviour, including self-harm, suicide threats and plans, and self-cutting. These effects are some of the behaviours exhibited by those recruited into cultism and insurgency. Ambrose (2018) further observes that behavioural issues are serious concerns in the Nigerian school system, stemming from deviant behaviours among students.

Unfortunately, many people ignore the imminent challenges class-skipping causes within and outside the school setting. High records of bullying in schools, cultism within and outside the environment, robbery, internet fraud, gangsterism, kidnapping, and more might be the aftermaths of class skippers who are disconnected from schools and left unattended to during their school days before dropping out or being pushed out of the school system. They invariably turn into threats and nuisances in the community.

Furthermore, achieving a safe, secure, and delinquent-free society, in addition to the actualisation of Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4) - education for all, in Nigeria, could be a significant challenge given the rate at which schools and societies produce class skippers who are left unattended, subsequently becoming disconnected from school and engaging in criminal and maladaptive behaviour. This also explains why the crime rate is high in Lagos State compared to other states in Nigeria. This was confirmed by Oguntunde, Ojo, Okagbue, and Oguntunde (2018) when they suggested that the high crime rate in Lagos and other similar states might be due to

students being disconnected from school.

However, there is a dearth of research on the assertion that class skippers exist in schools in Lagos State, Nigeria and that class-skipping behaviour might also be a cause of juvenile delinquency among young adults. Thus, there is a need for a study to gather facts and establish the existence of class skipping and the tendency of class skippers to engage in undesirable deviant behaviours, including juvenile delinquency. Hence, the relevance of this study.

Research Questions:

The questions the study is set to answer include:

1. What is the percentage of students and teachers who are aware of class skipping behaviour in Lagos State Secondary School?
2. What is the average number and percentage of students in the Lagos State public secondary school classroom?
3. What is the average number of students skipping class in a particular Lagos State Public Secondary School classroom?
4. What is the average number of students that skip class in a particular school in Lagos State public secondary school?
5. What is the perception of the respondents on class skippers as a cause of Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos state public secondary schools?
6. What is the perception of the respondents on the class skippers in Lagos State public secondary schools as potential touts and cult members after school?
7. What is the respondents' perception of students' exhibition of undesirable behaviours outside the schools?
8. What is the respondents' perception of the rehabilitation of the class skippers before they leave the public secondary schools in Lagos state?

Methodology

The population of the study was all public secondary school students and teachers in Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State has 357 junior secondary schools, 326 senior secondary schools, and 635,573 students (Ministry of Education, Lagos State School Census Report, 2022). The secondary schools in Lagos state are divided into six education districts under a Tutor-General/Permanent-Secretary. Each District is further divided into zones, and each zone houses the schools. The sample consisted of one hundred and twenty-two (122) students and fifty-nine (59) teachers in Lagos State public secondary schools. The convenience sampling technique was used for participant selection. The participants were taken from all six education districts: twenty-three (23) junior secondary schools and sixty-one (61) senior secondary schools, with a total of eighty-four (84) secondary schools. A self-developed questionnaire with face validity by a test and evaluation authority in the Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, was used to collect data. The questionnaire has two sections. Section A contained the demographic information on the personal data of the respondents, that is,

the class/level taught or in by the respondents than the average data of the class skippers in the class and school with the estimate population of the school. Section B was on the perception of the respondents on class skippers in Lagos State. The section has only six items. The data was analysed using percentages.

Research Question 1

What is the percentage of students and teachers aware of class skipping behavior in Lagos State secondary school?

		Awareness of class skippers			
		No	Yes	Total	
Status	Student	Count	32	90	122
		% within status	26.2%	73.8%	100.0%
		% within Awareness of class skippers	74.4%	65.2%	67.4%
		% of Total	17.7%	49.7%	67.4%
Teacher	Count	11	48	59	
		% within status	18.6%	81.4%	100.0%
		% within Awareness of class skippers	25.6%	34.8%	32.6%
		% of Total	6.1%	26.5%	32.6%
Total	Count	43	138	181	
		% within status	23.8%	76.2%	100.0%
		% within Awareness of class skippers	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	23.8%	76.2%	100.0%

The research question 1 reveals out of 122 student respondents 73.8% were aware of the class skippers in their classes and/or schools; while out of the teacher respondents, 81.4% were aware of the class skippers. In total 76.2% of all the 181 respondents were aware of the class skippers in their classes and/or schools.

Research Question 2

What is the average number and percentage of students in the classroom in Lagos State public secondary school?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25-50	45	24.9	25.4	25.4
	51-100	101	55.8	57.1	82.5
	101-150	18	9.9	10.2	92.7
	151 and above	9	5.0	5.1	97.7
	5.00	3	1.7	1.7	99.4
	8.00	1	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	177	97.8	100.0	
Missing	System	4	2.2		
Total		181	100.0		

Research question 2 reveals that the class population in Lagos State is in the following range: students' population between 51 and 100 in a classroom has the highest percentage of 55.8%, then class between 25 and 50 has the next which is 24.9%. This will be class 101-150 with 9.9% and 151 and above with 5.0%.

Research question 3

What is the average number of students that skip class in a particular classroom in Lagos state public secondary school?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5	89	49.2	53.0	53.0
	6-10	42	23.2	25.0	78.0
	11-15	28	15.5	16.7	94.6
	Others	6	3.3	3.6	98.2
	5.00	3	1.7	1.8	100.0
	Total	168	92.8	100.0	
Missing	System	13	7.2		
Total		181	100.0		

The research question 3 reveals that between 1 and 5 students skip the class in a particular classroom in Lagos State and it has the highest percentage of 53.0, then comes the range of students between 6 and 10 with 25.9%,16.7% affirmed that 11-15 students skip the class and more than 15 students as ascertained by 3.6% respondents. Therefore, an average of 1-5 students skips a particular class in Lagos state school.

Research Question 4

What is the average number of students that skip class in a particular school in Lagos State public secondary school?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-10	89	49.2	52.4	52.4
	11-20	20	11.0	11.8	64.1
	21-30	31	17.1	18.2	82.4
	31 and above	29	16.0	17.1	99.4
	5.00	1	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	170	93.9	100.0	
Missing	System	11	6.1		
Total		181	100.0		

Research question 4 reveals that at least in a school, an average of 1-10 students skip the class (52.4%), then 21-30 students (18.2%), 31 and above students skip the class in a school (17.1%), and lastly 11-20 students skip the class (11.8%). This result shows that at least between 1 and 10 class skippers can be obtained from a whole school, and there can be as many as 30 and above class skippers in a school.

Research Question 5

What is the perception of the respondents on class skippers as a cause of Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos state public secondary schools?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	17	9.4	9.5	9.5
	Disagree	13	7.2	7.3	16.8
	Undecided	44	24.3	24.6	41.3
	Agree	57	31.5	31.8	73.2
	strongly agree	47	26.0	26.3	99.4
	43.00	1	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	179	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.1		
Total		181	100.0		

Research question 5 reveals that 58.1% of the respondents agreed that the class skippers

might be the cause of juvenile delinquency, while 41.4 disagreed.

Research Question 6

What is the respondents' perception of class skippers in Lagos State public secondary schools as potential touts and cult members after school?

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	17	9.4	9.5	9.5
	Disagree	16	8.8	8.9	18.4
	Undecided	27	14.9	15.1	33.5
	Agree	53	29.3	29.6	63.1
	strongly agree	66	36.5	36.9	100.0
	Total	179	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.1		
Total		181	100.0		

Research question 6 reveals that 66.5% of the respondents agreed that the class skippers are likely to be touts and cultists after school life, and 33.5% disagreed.

Research Question 7

What is the respondents' perception of an exhibition of undesirable behaviours by students outside the schools?

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	5	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Disagree	17	9.4	9.4	12.2
	Undecided	21	11.6	11.7	23.9
	Agree	71	39.2	39.4	63.3
	strongly agree	66	36.5	36.7	100.0
	Total	180	99.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.6		
Total		181	100.0		

Research question 7 shows that 76.1% of the teachers and students agreed that class skippers mostly engage in undesirable behaviours outside the schools, and 23.9% disagreed.

Research Question 8

What is the respondents' perception of the rehabilitation of the class skippers before they

leave the schools?

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	8	4.4	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	11	6.1	6.2	10.7
	Undecided	12	6.6	6.8	17.5
	Agree	46	25.4	26.0	43.5
	strongly agree	100	55.2	56.5	100.0
	Total		177	97.8	100.0
Missing	System	4	2.2		
Total		181	100.0		

Research question 8 reveals that 82.5% of the teachers and students in Lagos State agreed that the class skippers could be rehabilitated and helped towards acquiring and increasing adaptive behavior, while 17.5% disagreed.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to generate data on the perceptions of teachers and students in Lagos State regarding the existence of class skippers in public secondary schools. It aimed to determine the relationship between class skippers and juvenile delinquency, as well as the perceptions of teachers and students on the possibility of rehabilitating and assisting them. The study findings showed that most (76.2%) of teachers and students are aware of students skipping class in their schools. This refuted the assertion of the non-existence of class-skipping and ascertained its prevalence in Lagos State public secondary schools.

Additionally, the study revealed that the average class size in Lagos State public secondary schools ranges from 50 to 100 students, with between one and five class skippers per classroom. This indicates the prevalence of class skippers in many classrooms in Lagos state public schools. On average, 1-5 students skip class per classroom, and a minimum of 1-10 skip class in a school in Lagos State. This underscores the need for appropriate counselling interventions to address class skipping, thereby enhancing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Education for all) and reducing juvenile delinquent behaviours in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the study suggested that class skipping might be a cause of juvenile delinquency, aligning with Ambrose's (2018) identification of deviant behaviours in public schools in Nigeria as a serious threat. It also supported Patel, Parashram, and Vairagi's (2023) findings that the rate of juvenile delinquency is high in secondary schools. The agreement could be because acts perpetrated by class-skippers are juvenile delinquent acts which could be exhibited in the class-skippers' hideouts.

students outside the school environment are likely to be by class skippers. This supports Ishaq, Musa, and Abdulhafiz's (2019) identification of inadequate education as Nigeria's root cause of insecurity. The research suggested that adequate priority should be given to education in the nation's budget and that schools should be equipped with adequate teaching and learning facilities, including counselling interventions, to reduce the rate of deviant behaviours. Adequate attention given to schools will equate with essential learning and teaching facilities and professional teachers and counsellors. This will, therefore, create for the student's good school bonding, climate safety and practical teacher support that will reduce class-skipping behaviours.

Finally, 82.1% of the Lagos State teachers and students who were respondents to the study affirmed the possibility of rehabilitating class skippers. This supports Khuluqo and Sumedi's (2016) recommendation for school and family programs to curb juvenile delinquency among high school students and highlights the relevance of counselling interventions. Additionally, the results align with Ambrose's (2018) identification of counselling interventions such as behaviour management theory, cognitive methods, and dialectical behaviour therapy as treatments to alleviate deviant behaviours in public schools in Nigeria.

Implications for Value Re-orientation

This research emphasises the need for value reorientation among all education stakeholders to curb class-skipping behaviour, reduce juvenile delinquent behaviours, and enhance Sustainable Development Goal 4 education for all in Nigeria. It is also crucial to ensure value reorientation in recruiting professional counsellors in all school settings and to provide value reorientation for students through various effective psychological interventions to achieve the desired results.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the prevalence of class-skipping behaviour in Nigeria's Lagos State public secondary schools. It has established a strong relationship between class skipping and undesirable behaviour, as well as juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, it has highlighted the importance of counselling intervention to curb class skipping and transform the skippers into productive community members. Therefore, the study concludes that addressing the prevalence of class skipping without delay is essential to reduce insecurity in Nigeria and advance Sustainable Development Goal Four education for all.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. A full-time school counsellor should be employed and assigned to each secondary school in Nigeria
2. Training that will enhance the school counsellors' effectiveness in treating deviant behaviours and class skipping should be explored by the government and International organisations in order to achieve sustainable development goals and education for all.
3. The Lagos state government should address the ratio of teachers/students in public schools

and provide more 21st-century teaching and learning facilities in all schools.

4. School counsellors should pay attention to class skippers and interact with them positively.
5. Researchers should carry out further studies on the prevalence of class skipping in other states of Nigeria and establish its relationship with the insecurity and terrorist acts in the country.

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