

Students' Birth Order, School Type and Truancy among Senior Secondary School Students in Niger State, Nigeria: Implications for Counseling

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Abstract

The study determined relationship between students' birth order, school type and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State, Nigeria. Two objectives were stated and two null hypotheses were tested. Correlation design was employed for the study. The target population for the study comprised of all the truant senior secondary school students in their first year (SS1) and their parents in Niger State. The population of SSI in Niger State was 75,383 students, however, four hundred truant SSI students and their parents constituted the sample of the study, which was drawn purposively from the selected 24 schools in 8 education zones of Niger State. Parents Questionnaire (PQ) and Performa on Truancy among Senior Secondary School Students' (PTSSSS) were used for data collection. The PQ was validated using split-half method and reliability coefficient of .72 was found which shows that the instrument was reliable for the purpose of this study. The data collected for the study was analyzed using chi-square and t-test of independent samples. The results were considered at $P < .05$ level. The findings of the study revealed that there was significant relationship between students' birth order and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State. It is further discovered that there was no significant difference between the mean truancy of boarding and day schools among senior secondary school students in Niger State. Based on findings of the study the researchers concluded that being lastborns is one of the factors responsible for truancy among secondary school students. It was also concluded that family factors can influence truancy higher than school factors among secondary school students.

Keywords: *Students birth order, School type, Truancy and Senior secondary school*

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Background to the Study

Education is regarded as light which expels darkness from life and focuses attention in all round development of the individuals, not only in the present age, but also in the past. It is not only important to admit children to schools and provide facilities for them but it is also important to prevent wastage and stagnation of those who have been admitted into schools. In Nigeria, like any other developing nation, education is regarded as the route that leads to vocational development, job opportunities, wealth and prestige. Therefore, it is a primary obligation in the educational industry for learners to attend schools regularly and punctually too. The development of any nation or community depends largely on the quality of education of such a nation. It is generally believed that the basis for any true development must commence with the development of human resources. Formal education remains the vehicle for socio-economic development and social mobilization in any society (Shittu, 2004).

Traditionally, parents or guardians are vested with responsibilities of socializing and providing the basic needs of the child implicitly, therefore, a child parent's socio-economic background plays a vital role in general well being of the child both at home and in school (Anyakoha & Eluwa, 1991). The parents are saddled with the responsibility of giving the offspring a qualitative and decent pattern of living and they are expected to satisfy children economic needs like feeding, clothing, shelter, medical provision, and so on. Parents are also expected to transmit the cultural values and norms to the young generation in order to be fully integrated into the society. Kobiowu (1994) believed that the inculcation of basic social values, desirable character traits and norms are learnt first at home; the home assists in laying the foundation for personality and character development of a child. It seems the success or failure of an individual depends on the type of social take-off acquired in the family setting, the child is trained in language, positive character traits, fundamental intellectual knowledge, and vocational skills and so on, through the initiation by the adult members of the family like father, mother and other siblings at home.

Adler (1928) suggested that the position a child had by the order of birth significantly affected the child's growth and personality, furthermore, studies in the late 20th century and early 21st century shows even greater influence, contributing to intelligence, career choice and to a certain degree, success in adulthood. Being born first, somewhere in the middle or last itself is of less significance, but what matters is how that birth order affects how a child is treated by parents and other siblings and how that child feels about it. Moreover, birth order is the chronological order of sibling births in a family, the sequences by which children are born into a family are regarded as one of the factors that determine both the personality and behaviour. Birth order can also be view as person's rank by age among his or her siblings; birth order is often believed to have a profound and lasting effect on psychological development and behaviour of individuals, however, some parents give special attentions to firstborns and lastborns in a family.

Reid (1999) states that the differences in terms of behaviour among the students exists due to the parents' socio-economic background such as nutrition and health status, environment at home, parents' income, parents' education level and experiences, child's birth order (preferential treatment), means of recreation in the family are the main factors that affect the educational and social achievement of students. Students from low socio-economic background or less prefer by parents' are associated with poor interest in school activities and their behaviours are often anti-school, such as absenteeism, truancy,

breaking school rules and regulations, sexual violation, drug abuse, poor academic achievement, rioting, protesting in every slight and minor school problems (Woolfolk, 1993). Truancy is one of the significant problems that exist in schools and it affects learners' performance (Eremie, 2015). The concept truancy; describes the undesired irregularity in school attendance. Often, it is a description of behaviour of learners who have not been attending school regularly as required by the school, parents, or the school authorities.

Sambo (2005) defined truancy as absence that has not been authorised by the school and where leave has not been given or approved. It is when students are absent from school without their parents' knowledge or permission. Sometimes it is called 'wagging' or 'skipping' school, students who are truants tend to hide it from their parents or do it against their parents' wishes or consents. Truant behaviour is a problem for the individual, the family, the school and society in general. Truancy refers to absence from school caused by student of his/her own free will, and usually does not refer to legitimate excused absence, such as ones related to a medical conditions, it is the term referring to an absence that is associated with the most brazen student's irresponsibility and results in the greatest consequences, students who attend schools but do not attend classes is also referred to as truant. Truancy is regarded as a status offence because it is usually apply to those students that are minors (children and adolescents).

Furthermore, Gabb (1997) defined truancy as a means of keeping away from school or leaving school without permission. It is when a student decided to absent him/her self from school without the approval of the school authority or parental consent. Halilu (2001) also conceptualized truancy as the act of keeping away from school for no good reason, neglecting school duties, roaming about, idling away school time and wandering around the town during school hours. Oyebanji (1997) believes that any child who stays away from school will miss so many lessons that he will as a result fall behind other children in the class. She stressed that the impact on each individual concerned and their academic performance should be viewed as a very serious matter of concerned to parents. Truancy is a problem because the absent students cannot benefit from the various programmes that the school offers. Effects of truancy include lower academic achievements and criminal activities (Garry, 2001). Gabb (1997) believed that the levels of truancy are higher in day secondary schools than boarding secondary school, according to him a truant student's leaves home but either does not get to school or escapes from school or class to engage in any other activities he/she fancies, but boarding students' remains in school even after classes.

Carney (2013) reported that there was a significant association between students' birth order and truant truancy behaviour, although the direction is unknown. The senior secondary school students in Niger State are mandated by school laws to attend school regularly and punctually but some students absent themselves from school activities hence engaging in truancy. The rate of truancy in recent time in senior secondary schools in Niger State has become a source of concern to parents, teachers, counsellors, school administrators and State Ministry of Education, Minna as observed by the researcher. It is against this background that the researchers determine the relationship between students' birth order, school type and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

There has been an outcry against the truant behaviour of students in the senior secondary schools in Nigeria. Truancy is a significant problem in Nigeria and other parts of the world, mostly under-develop and developing countries (Eremie, 2015). Attending schools and staying in schools is the first step to achieved academic excellence and good education. The senior secondary students in Niger State are mandated by the school laws to attend school daily, but many students absent themselves from school activities hence engaging in truancy as observed by the researcher. (Maynard, 2012) identified several possible causes of truancy among secondary school students which include students' factors, family factors, school factors and community factors. Truancy is a serious anti-social problem, if left unchecked will render the classroom instruction ineffective as such the general purpose of education will be defeated and cannot be achieved in meaningful manner.

The objectives of secondary school education in Nigeria are to provide students with academic and vocational skills as well as moral ethics (National Policy on Education, 2013). But it is quite unfortunate that these objectives are not being fully achieved in Niger State due to high level of students' involvement in truant behaviour as observed by the researcher. Maintaining school attendance has become a major concern of parents, teachers, counsellors, school administrators, State Ministry of Education, Niger State and in senior secondary schools, of which the concern is greater in public schools in Niger State, Nigeria. This is because truancy has become more common over the years and has created serious problems in the educational system today in Niger State, and the rest of Nigeria. Truant behaviour is a problem for the individual, the family, the school and society in general. The consequences of truancy can range from early school-drop out, delinquency behaviour, substance and alcohol abuse, drug addiction, low academic scores, teenage pregnancy, involvement in juvenile misconducts, and eventually the adult corrections system (Henry & Thornberry, 2010).

Literature Review

Students' Birth Order and Truancy among Secondary School Students

People are intrigued that children of a family behave differently although they were raised in the same environment, such as neighbourhood and share the same genetic pools from both of their parents. Drajea and O'Sullivan (2014) believed that student's birth orders are factors that precipitate behaviour problems like truancy among secondary school students. Birth order also known as the ordinal position is the rank of siblings by age, being the firstborn, middle child, last-born. Adler (1928) had theorized that each birth position has a set of personality traits; according to him, firstborns are always seen as leaders, high-achievers, ambitious and conforming. They attempt to please their parents via traditional ways, which are through academic performance and responsible behaviours, therefore they avoid truancy. Middle children, on the other hand, may experience difficulty finding a position of privilege and significance in the family because they never have the opportunity to monopolize parents' attention. Thus, they constantly fight to stay ahead of their younger siblings and engaged in truancy. In contrast, lastborns and only child in the family are frequently viewed as the spoiled kid of the family. Adler (1928) believed that there was a significant relationship between birth order and truancy among secondary school students.

Leman (1985) believed that the firstborn child experiences the 'only child life' and is centre of attention until the second-born child arrives, which may cause anger and frustration. If the situation is handled appropriately, the firstborn child could develop into a responsible,

protective person and hence, avoid truancy. However, in extreme cases when the situation is handled inappropriately, the firstborn can become truant and subsequently criminal. According to him, Ordinal position (birth order) of a child in a family group is at least one source of differential parental attitude in our society and has the capacity to determine children truant behaviour. Birth order has a statistically significant relationship with truancy among secondary school students (Leman, 1985).

Chege (2015) determined relationship between birth order and truancy among high school students in Eldoret town. One of the objectives was to determine relationship between birth orders and truancy among high school students in Eldoret, USA. Eldoret tested one (1) hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Ex post facto design was adopted for the study. Sample of 20 firstborns, 20 middle children, and 20 last-born was drawn using purposive sampling technique from the population in Eldoret; the sample comprised 30 male and 30 female respondents. Data was collected using a self-developed instrument (questionnaire) with high validity and reliability and the data collected was analysed using chi-square. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between birth order and truancy among high school students Eldoret town. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that middle children and last-born are likely to engage in truancy than their firstborns.

Olaitan, Nayaya and Lukman (2013) conducted a study on management of disciplinary problems in secondary schools with reference to Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State. The study was aimed at investigating the types of disciplinary problems, their possible causes and means of managing them. One of the objectives of the study was to determine the relationship between birth order and truancy among secondary school students in Jalingo Metropolis. The researchers adopted survey design for the study. One thousand respondents were sampled from four (4) governments owned secondary schools in Jalingo Metropolis. The researchers used a self-developed questionnaire tagged Managing Disciplinary Problem Questionnaire (MDPQ) for data collection and the data collected was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results of the study showed, that there was significant relationship between birth order and truancy among secondary school students in Jalingo Metropolis. The study also found truancy, absenteeism, fighting, stealing and drug addiction as typical examples of disciplinary problems experienced in the study area.

School Type and Truancy among Secondary School Students

Schools are established as the agent of the society to mould the habits, interests and feelings of children and transmit the societal norms, culture, values and tradition from one generation to another, despite this, some students seem not to understand why they should be in school and attend classes. They do this by not attending classes or dodging some lessons and extracurricular activities, this voluntary absence from school and dodging lessons often is referred to as truancy. Gabb (1997) believed that the levels of truancy are higher in day secondary schools than boarding secondary school, according to him a truant student leaves home but either does not get to school or escapes from school or class to engage in any other activities he/she fancies, but boarding student remain in school even after classes. Stratton & Reid (2008) stated that other factors that contribute to truancy indirectly or directly includes school type (boarding and day), single parenthood status, parental drug abuse, stressed families and parents with low level of education.

Wachanga (2003) determined the causes of truancy among secondary school students in Murang District, Kenya. One of the objectives of the study was to determine difference between truancy among secondary schools students by school type. The researcher adopted survey design for the study and sample of 120 students was selected from the population using purposive sampling technique. Self-constructed questionnaire was used to collect data and the data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and t-test of independent samples. The findings of the study revealed that there was significant difference between boarding truancy and day truancy among secondary school students in favour of boarding schools. The findings of the study also revealed that (91%) of the students felt that parents were poor role models, (50%) of the students felt that parents expectations were too high and unrealistic for them, while 23% of the students blamed their truant behaviour to poor parenting and poor family background. Based on the findings of the study the researcher concluded that boarding schools, parents and peers play a key role in contributing truancy among secondary schools students.

Habib (2003) determined difference between truancy among secondary school students by school type in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and samples of 654 (330 boarding students and 324 day students) truant students were purposively selected from the population. Proforma was used as instrument for data collection; the data collected was analysed using t-test of independent samples. The findings of the study revealed that there was significant difference between boarding truancy and day truancy among secondary school students in Kaduna State in favour of day. Based on the findings the researcher concluded that day secondary school students are more prone to challenges that can keep them away from schools than boarding secondary school students.

Komakech and Osuu (2014) conducted a study on students' truancy: A silent killer of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in Uganda. One of the objectives of the study was to determine the difference between truancy among secondary school students by school type in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Uganda. The researchers employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches/methods and descriptive cross sectional design was used for the study. Population of the study was one thousand (1,000), sample of 278 truant students were drawn from the population through stratified random sampling technique using four (4) districts of Serere, Ngora, Soroti and Kumi. Data was collected using secondary and primary sources. Secondary sources consisted of publications, reports and literature related to students' truancy while primary data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. The data collected was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study showed that there was significant difference between boarding truancy and day truancy among secondary school students in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Uganda in favour of boarding school.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to determine:

1. Relationship between students' birth order and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State.
2. Difference between truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State by school type.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between students' birth order and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between truancy among senior secondary school students from boarding and day schools in Niger State.

Methodology

The design of the study was correlation design adopted to determine relationship between students' birth order, school type and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State, Nigeria. The target populations for this study were all truant students in public senior secondary schools in their first year (SS1) in Niger State. The population of (SS1) students in Niger State are seventy five thousand three hundred and eighty three (75,383) students. 22,657 (30%) of the population are boys while 52,726 (70%) of the population are girls. There are two hundred and one (201) public senior secondary schools. Through the process of stratified random sampling technique, a total of twenty four (24) public senior secondary schools (three schools from each zone) representing about (12%) of the schools were selected from all the eight (8) education zones to participate in the research. These 24 public senior secondary schools and (SSI) are chosen because they are more prone to truancy and truancy was common among them. Accordingly, four hundred (400) SSI truant students were selected from the sampled schools through purposive sampling techniques. These sample size of 400 (SS1) truant students were selected based on the recommendation of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) with regard to the determination of sample size from a given population.

The research instruments that was used in this study are Parents Questionnaire (PQ) developed by Hamman-Tukur (1991) and Proforma on Truancy among Senior Secondary School Students' (PTSSSS) designed by the researcher. The Parents Questionnaire was adapted to obtain data on students' birth order and school type of sampled (SS1) students. Parents Questionnaire (PQ) consists of sections A and B. Section A has items on the truant (SS1) student's birth order and school type. While, section B has items on the parents' income, parents' occupation, parents' education level, all the items of the Parents Questionnaire are open-ended with the exception of parent's income. The Proforma on Truancy among Senior Secondary School Students' (PTSSSS) was used to collect data on truancy from sample students (SS1), from the school attendance register, students' gender, school location, school type and number of days (SS1) students' kept away from school without the permission of parents and the school authority per term. The instrument was validated through pilot study. One hundred copies of PQ were administered to truant students in private senior secondary schools in their first year (SS1) in Minna Metropolis in Niger State; these truant students were not part of the population of truant students for the main study, rather they have similar issues with the truant students involved in the main study. Split-half method was used and reliability coefficient of .72 was obtained at $p < .05$, this shows that the instrument was reliable for the purpose of this study. The data collected for the main study were analyzed using chi-square and t-test of independent samples. The results were considered at $P < .05$ level.

Results

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between students' birth order and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State.

Table 1a: Contingency Table of Students' Birth Order and their Truancy

Students Truancy (Per Term)	Students Birth Order			
	1 st to 10 th Position	11 th to 20 th Position	21 st and above Position	
30 – 39 days	43 (26)	64 (38)	61 (36)	168 (100)
40 – 49 days	38 (32)	56 (46)	26 (22)	120 (100)
50 and above days	14 (13)	47 (42)	51 (45)	112 (100)
Total	95 (24)	167 (42)	138 (34)	400 (100)

Note: Figures in braces are percentages

Table 1a indicated that 42% of truant students fall between 11th to 20th positions on the birth list, 34% of truant students were fall between 21st and above positions on the birth list and 24% of truant students were fall between 1st to 10th positions on the birth list, this implies that majority of the truant students fall between 11th to 20th positions on the birth list.

Table 1b: Chi-Square of Relationship between Students' Birth Order and theirs Truancy

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig.	Remarks
Pearson Chi-Square	20.45	4	.001			S
Likelihood Ratio	21.90	4	.001	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test	21.55			.001		
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.01	1	.045	.045	.025	
N of Valid Cases	400					

Key: S= Significant

Table 1b indicated that the Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) value is .001 is less than .05, this implies that there was significant relationship between students birth order and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State, Therefore, hypothesis (Ho₁) which states that there is no significant relationship between students birth order and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State was rejected.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between truancy among senior secondary school students from boarding and day schools in Niger State.

Table 2: t-test of Independent Samples of Difference between Truancy among Senior Secondary School Students by School Type

School Type	N	Mean	SD	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	t-Value	P-Value	Remarks
Boarding	196	41.55	7.85	398	.661	.439	.05	NS
Day	204	41.90	8.13					

Key: NS=Not Significant

Table 2 indicated that the Sig. (2-tailed) value is .661 is greater than .05, this implies that there was no significant difference between the mean truancy of boarding students and day students among senior secondary school students in Niger State, Therefore, Hypothesis (Ho₂) which states that there is no significant difference between truancy among senior secondary school students from boarding and day schools in Niger State was accepted.

Discussion

The findings of the study with respect to the first hypothesis (Ho₁) which states that there is no significant relationship between students' birth order and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State. The findings of this study revealed that there was significant relationship between students' birth order and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State, Nigeria. The finding of this study seemed to be in consistent with that of (Leman, 1985; Olaitan, Nayaya & Lukman, 2013 & Chege, 2015) who reported that there was statistically significant relationship between student's birth order and truancy among secondary school students.

The findings of the study with respect to the second hypothesis (Ho₂) which states that there is no significant difference between truancy among senior secondary school students from boarding and day schools in Niger State. The findings of the study showed that there was no significant difference between truancy among senior secondary school students from boarding and day schools in Niger State, Nigeria. The findings of the study disagreed with that of (Wachanga, 2003 & Komakech & Osuu, 2014) who found that statistically significant difference exist between truancy among secondary school students by school type in favour of boarding schools. (Gabb, 1997 & Habib, 2003) found significant difference between truancy among secondary school students by school type in favour of day schools.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it was concluded that there was significant association between students' birth order and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State, being lastborns is one of the factors responsible for truancy among secondary school students. It was concluded that there was no significant difference between truancy among senior secondary school students from boarding and day schools in Niger State, Nigeria. This implies that the rates of truancy in both boarding and day secondary schools are same in Niger State, based on that it was concluded that family factors can influence truancy higher than school factors among secondary school students.

Implications for Counselling

The findings have implications for counselling. Since there was significant relationship between students' birth order and truancy among senior secondary school students in Niger State, counsellors in secondary school should give special attention to the middle and lastborns students in their effort to reduce truancy. However, since there was no significant difference between truancy among senior secondary school students from boarding and day schools in Niger State, counsellors are recommended to get cell phones number of parents of their clients (students) to call whenever the student's are absence in class or school.

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