

BREAKING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF
FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR STUDENTS' TRUANCY

Abstract

The main components of a "school-to-prison pipeline" have been identified as academic failures, punitive disciplinary methods, and dropouts. Truancy is a disciplinary problem, which frequently occurs among school students and it has many contributors as well as inter-related factors. It is a growing problem and it often becomes a prelude to other delinquent behaviours. The study objective was to determine the prevalence of truancy as well as factors related to it. Although there is a substantial amount of research on truancy, few studies have sought to explore the multi-faceted factors that amplify or mitigate this canker. This review work is based on 120 research papers from digital resources. Findings from various studies examined, identified the family, school related problems and the student themselves as the major factors contributing to truancy among the students. The findings from the review indicated that supportive leadership, devoted and supportive staff, school-wide behaviour control, and efficient academic education are school-level features that can assist reduce truancy among students. For schools, parents and districts that want to put strategies in place that may shield students from the dangers of truancy, implications and recommendations are provided.

Keywords: Senior High School, Students Factors, Family Factors, School Factors, teacher Factors, Peers, Truancy.

1.0 Introduction

A school is a place that nurtures the potential of individuals and the entrance to the academic excellence of our next generation. Thus, in most nations where children are required to attend school for at least eleven years of their lives, continuing to attend school has become a legal requirement of the educational system (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). But some students disobey the rule due to some internal and external undesirable causes, which contribute to the high prevalence of truancy in our educational system from primary to tertiary levels (Njoroge & Nyabuto, 2014). Truancy, described as a student deliberately skipping one or more classes, is becoming a more widely recognized concern. Truancy has long been stigmatized as a cankerworm that gnaws at the foundations of education programmes. This created a number of barriers and obstacles for senior high school students in their academic careers (Adeyemi, 2011; Animasahun, 2007). Any deliberate, unauthorized, and premeditated absence from school is referred to as truancy. It might also apply to students who show up to school but do not take their classes. Truancy is viewed as a delinquent and anti-social behaviour as well as irregular and non-school attendance behaviour (Animasahun, 2009). Truancy is a social, legal, and

academic delinquency issue. Juvenile truancy jeopardizes children's prospects of achieving their educational goals (Siziya, Muula, & Rudatsikira, 2007).

According to Kee (2001), truancy is a deliberate, premeditated, and planned absence of students from educational institutions without their parents' consent or a reasonable explanation. According to Adeyemi (2011), truancy is the act of missing school without permission. Truancy is described similarly by Chukwuka (2013) as "absence from school for no legitimate reason." In their discussion on truancy, Ishak and Fin (2015) note that the act entails a student's wilful absence from school without permission as well as their leaving and eluding of particular class periods.

Numerous factors contribute to students' truancy, according to research. Truancy is attributed by Rohrman (2001) and Shah et al., (2012) to a child's personality, family history, and concerned community. According to Ubogu (2004), institutional reasons like teachers' attitudes, ineffective administration, and high costs of education, as well as conditions like illness, old age, financial difficulties, social class, and geographic location, are the main contributory factors to truancy. Siziya, Muula, and Rudatsikira (2007) investigated the causes of truancy and discovered that because some students come from impoverished homes, many of them sometimes skip meals in order to go to school. As a result, they skip class because they need time to care for themselves. Reid (2006), while conducting a research on the causes, viewpoints, and traits of school absenteeism and truancy discovered that peer group, relationships with instructors, curriculum design, familial history, and mistreatment are the elements that contribute to truancy. Furthermore, the author demonstrated that truancy is similar to absenteeism but that it differs in that it involves a child missing school or other scheduled events without a valid cause and without parental consent.

Ishak and Fin (2015) assert that the school setting itself may have a big impact on a student's decision to skip classes. In other words, the educational system and the environment have a significant impact on how well students succeed. The emergence of truant behaviours among students may be the result of several school-related circumstances. Regarding the causes of truancy, Epstein & Sheldon (2002) noted that truancy is frequent in schools with poor truancy policy implementation, poor parent-teacher contact, uncooperative teachers, unyielding class homework/assignments and insufficient sensitivity to a range of problems. Maynard (2006) found that truancy has a significant relationship with the various teaching and learning strategies, teachers' absenteeism, low teacher expectations, poor discipline, and poor teacher-student communication. Lack of parental supervision, home troubles, broken homes, drug and alcohol abuse, a lack of family support, household issues, and household care responsibilities are some other contributing elements that led to truant behaviour in children (Hopskins, Green & Burns, 2011; Maduabuchi, 2013; Van Breda, 2014). Likewise, ailments, social incapacity, abnormal bodily and mental health, lack of self-esteem, poor peer relationship, and a learner's unsatisfactory academic performance are other factors that impelled students to miss school (Raid, 2006; Maduabuchi, 2013; Gosain, 2013).

In the view of Wall (2005), the most significant underlying and contributing factors that contribute to truancy include lack of parental supervision or guidance, parental unemployment, parental drug and alcohol abuse, parental ignorance of attendant policies, and conflicting views about the value of education. According to Gosain (2013), who examined the causes of truancy in adolescent children, the school and home settings have the most impact on the behaviour of the children. In same vein, Siziya, Adamen, Mulla, and Rudatsirikira's (2007) revealed in their study that truancy was caused by a number of problems, including poor academic performance, bullying, lack of food at home, and parental neglect.

Truancy has detrimental effects, including the possibility of criminal activity, social isolation, or academic failure through suspension, dismissal or dropping out of school (Huizinga et al., 2000). Truancy prevents students from learning effectively and lowers their academic progress. Regular absence from school has detrimental effects on both the communities in which the absentees live and the children who exhibit truancy, which deforms the society (Oluremi, 2013). Similar findings were made by MacGillivray and Mann-Erickson (2006), who discovered that children who engage in truant behaviours contribute to daytime crimes. Baker and Jansen (2000) and Garry (2001) opined that; children who skip school score worse academically. In examining how truancy and absenteeism affect secondary school students' academic performance, Musa (2014) concluded that the effects of truancy include lack of seriousness on the part of the students, poor academic performance, poor school performance, problematic behaviour with teachers and parents, missing classes, becoming a potential drop-out, threats to life and national development, and an uncertain and bleak future for the students. The authors main objective is to pinpoint the elements that contribute to truancy among Ghanaian senior high school (SHS) students. Additionally, it aims to get a thorough understanding of the connections between the truancy relevant elements.

1.1 Research Questions:

The present review paper seeks to give answers to the following questions:

- a. How do the previous researchers have conceptualized and operationalized truancy as a variable?
- b. What major factors are considered to contribute to truancy in schools?

2.0 Methods

For this study, primarily secondary data sources have been used and this is a purely review work which consist of 45 papers from databases like ERIC, Scopus, Taylor and Francis, ProQuest, Web of science, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, Science Direct etc. The researchers have used different key words like study habits of the Senior High School, Students Factors, Family, School, teacher, Peers, child delinquency, Truancy, factor influencing truancy in schools, academic performance, learning strategy etc. while searching on the internet. The research papers published from the year 2000 to 2022 were considered.

2.1 Selection Criteria of Research Papers

The researchers **selected** articles which were studied on student factors, family factors, school factors and relationship between truancy and academic performance. Initially 120 **articles** from the internet were downloaded and finally 45 research papers **were found suitable and were therefore** selected or included in the **main** study. The rest of the papers did not meet the above criteria after **thorough** examination.

3.0 Meaning of Truancy

The word truancy means “run away from the classes” and students who always tend to keep themselves away from studies and avoid attending classes are called truants. The Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell, 2002) defines truancy as the act or habit of staying away from school without permission. Davis Alison (cited in Duodu, 2003) **sees** truancy as a type of "delinquency" or at least a "difficulty of adjustment" which is due primarily to what sociologists call "cultural conflict." To Mutekwe and Mutekwe, (2013), truancy is a situation where some students cut classes regularly, become rude, exhibit temper tantrums when corrected and rarely do their academic work. Impliedly, truancy is more of attitude or behaviour than a mere non-attendance of classes.

The opinion of Ishak and Fin (2015), is that truancy is absence from school for whatever reason without leave, excluding those students who are certified or accepted as too ill to attend. However, Baskerville and Loveridge (2020) reserve the term for learners who are absent from school purely on their own initiative. In consonance with the view about truancy expressed in their book titled, *Out of School*, Colwell, Woodward and Hutchinson (2018) consider the term as school refusal, and go still further to divide truants as "school phobias" and "school refusers" many of whom will be absent on their own initiative. Further **to this**, they **asserted** that truants may be observed in terms of students who refuse school attendance completely and those who attend partly, who are marked present and then play truant from school.

To Ekstrand (2015), truancy is a situation where children stay away from school because they would rather be doing something else. The same view is shared by Christle, Jolivette and Nelson (2005) who describe truancy as intentionally staying away from school without permission. To them, this behaviour or practice is recurrent rather than happening once, and that leaving home but not reaching school; walking alone or as a group; spending the time playing football, riding bicycle, hunting for birds or fruits or watching films at cinema halls are among other things common characteristics of truants. In a similar explanation of truancy presented by Ishak and Fin (2015), **they** stated that, a truant is a student who absents himself or herself from school without a lawful cause and without the permission of his or her parents or the school authorities. Such a student goes where he/she can and does what he/she pleases but without being seen by his/her parents, neighbours or law enforcing officers. **Their** tacit conclusion is that truancy is a childhood disease which may be the result of many prevailing circumstances.

In the same way as Birioukov, (2016), Njoroge and Nyabuto, (2014) perceive truancy as the unexcused absence of a student, which is often the first indicator that the

student is losing his/her way and heading for trouble, a few of which include dropping out of school and engaging in high-risk behaviours. Thus, truancy is viewed as a gateway to criminal activity and students who are not in school on regular basis are more likely to become either victims or perpetrators of crime. The Los Angeles County Office of Education, blatantly exposing the precocious nature of truancy, asserts that it is "the most powerful predictor of delinquency" (Krakouer et al., 2017).

Duodu (2003) understands truancy as a habit acquired and exhibited by students and this takes different periods in the life of the truant student. He identifies, among other things, lateness; refusal to attend school on the pretext of not having material needed in school for school work; on-and-off attendance of school where the truant might feign sickness or other such excuses; intentionally refusing to return to school after break period; and staying away from school during co-curricular activities such as sports and games, and gardening, as a few manifestations of truancy in schools. It is explicit from these definitions that truancy is a repeated practice of avoiding or running away from school or class so as to engage in some activities or have one's own way, sometimes without the knowledge or notice of parents/guardians.

4.0 Factors contributing to truancy in schools

Modern psychology has shown that it is not only important to admit the children to schools and provide facilities for them but it is also important to prevent wastage and stagnation of those who have been admitted to schools (Baskerville & Loveridge, 2020). Truancy is the main cause of wastage and stagnation. Truancy is a disciplinary problem which frequently occurs among school students and it has many contributories as well as inter-related factors. These factors are classified as home, school and student factors.

4.1 Home Factors Responsible for Students' Truancy in School

Every student belongs to a home which constitutes his or her primary and immediate environment in the world. The influence of the home on an individual's behaviour and attitudes toward other people and society as they grow through childhood, adolescence and adulthood, therefore, cannot be underestimated (Ishak & Fin, 2015). A student's behaviour and attitude in school are thus intricately linked with his/her home environment. The review in this section focuses on:

- i. attitude of parents to the student's schooling
- ii. the relationship between poverty in the home and the child's school attendance
- iii. child labour and the student's school attendance.

4.1.1 Parents Attitude

Family or home factors play a crucial role in a young person's success or failure in school. A study of family patterns of interaction among non-achieving students in middle-class communities identified parental indifference, parental pressure, among other patterns, as a major pattern of interaction that created hazards for students (Cripps &

Zyromski, 2009). Parental indifference is a serious attitudinal problem that inhibits a child's schooling. This situation often results in parents' inattentiveness to the accomplishments of their wards. Such parents usually focus on their own careers and interests, at the expense of their wards' schooling. They ignore the basic school needs of the child. This behaviour of the parents would prompt the child to feel unloved and unappreciated and the resulting symptoms of such a troubled child in school are expressed in poor grades, truanting or dropping out of school altogether.

Citing parental pressure as a parental attitude which contribute to truancy in a school child, Bempechat and Shernoff, (2012) are assertive in their feeling that when parents become over protective, perfectionistic, domineering, and over-directing and constantly expect children to do better and better without ever giving attention to their achievements and capabilities, they (parents) do great harm to students. In such a circumstance, children are pressured to perform above the level of their ability. Consequently, a feeling of inadequacy, loss of hope, disinterestedness in school and pessimism emerges as a reaction or repercussion.

It has been disclosed (Cuban, 2009) that in England, many parents have serious doubt about the relevance and usefulness of today's schools in preparing children for adult life. Some parents are also not interested in school for various reasons and they have not also lost any opportunity for not being to school. Some parents keep their children at home to help them with household activities while others collude with anxious students who are afraid to leave and go to school. This attitude of the parents encourages their wards to have low attendance in school.

In the United States of America, it has been quite explicit (Fishman, 2014) that parents of low socio-economic standing produce drop-out children. Many parents, who complete only the fifth grade, often consider their wards graduating from junior high school to be sufficient. They sometimes discourage their children from attending school. Their older daughters are urged to stay at home to look after the younger siblings or do house duties. The sons are also expected to go out and look for work to do to earn income to help the family.

Similarly, a study in Sheffield, England, conducted by Connell et al., (2020) reveal that some students as well as their parents regard school as not very important. Some parents make it clear that they regard education, at least, with a considerable scepticism. Consequently, some of them do not see their wards absence from school as anything to worry about. This encourages the **wards** of such parents to have low attendance or irregular school attendance. The reality of this lukewarm attitude of some parents toward their wards' education is evident in the Great Britain Education Act of 1994, section thirty-six (36) and thirty-nine (39), quoted by Allen et al., (2009) that:

*“It is a parent's duty to ensure that a child of school going age receives efficient and full-time education suitable to his or her age, ability, and aptitude, either by attendance at school or otherwise, and if a child of compulsory age who is a registered student of a school fails to attend regularly, the parent is guilty of an **offense**” (section 39 of the 1994 Education Act of Britain).*

Parent's failure to care and provide for the needs of their wards in school usually has negative emotional and psychological effects on the students. In some cases, the students feel unhappy in school and they develop disinterestedness in school. This failure on the part of the parents as identified by Suleman, Hussain & Kayani, (2017) may be the repercussion of:

- i. their unfavourable attitude to the education of their children;
- ii. their carelessness about the student's performance:
- iii. lack of interest in Parents Teachers Association and Prize-Giving Day or school exhibition.

In a discussion of the best way to manage truancy, Duodu (2003) stated that the children he studied demonstrated some behaviour disorders which are the outcomes of parental rejection, inconsistency, lack of love or over-protection. He added that such unfortunate wards experience too little real love and protection that they lack sufficient motivation to accept demands and code of right and wrong of their own societies. The study of Duodu (2003) thus finally concludes that four main factors are responsible for making the home environment a fertile ground for breeding truancy. These factors include:

- i. Poverty: Poverty in the home of a student would make the parents unable to provide all the school needs such as uniforms, stationery and school fees for the student. The parents' failure to fulfil this obligation can lead the student to the threshold of truancy.
- ii. Maltreatment of children: Maltreatment suffered at the hands of some parents and guardians can force some students into truancy. Maltreatment may take the form of denying the child of food and or administering physical injuries on children. A child in this situation may not be regular at school.
- iii. Lack of appreciation of the values of education: Some parents and guardians decide when their wards should go to school and when they should stay at home to perform other chores. They can ask their wards to stay at home or even recall them from school to look after their younger siblings to enable their parents or guardians to attend to their businesses or other social engagements.
- iv. Breakdown of communal responsibility: This means that communal ownership and responsibility towards students have completely eroded. The elderly, most of whom are themselves guardians, no longer question students why they are not in school when school is in session. This situation is due to the fact that the elderly in most communities have declined this social responsibility for fear of attracting any form of disrespectful behaviour from students and incurring the displeasure of the student's parents or guardians.

The above discussions present a clear picture of many parents having lukewarm or negative attitude towards their wards' education and attendance to school, the obvious repercussion which is truancy or an irregular attendance of students to school.

4.1.2 Poverty in the Home

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English defines poverty as "existing in too small amounts; scarcity or lack". A clearer view of poverty is held by Atkinson et al., (2013) in 'New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology', who perceive poverty as a state of life where people barely survive. This perception of poverty is explained in terms of a life of struggle to obtain the necessities of life. The explanation carries an assertion that several families in developing world live below the poverty line- the minimum level of income needed to purchase the basic necessities of life.

The endemic nature of poverty in several Ghanaian homes is demonstrated in a study by Owusu (2022) purporting to finding reasons juveniles engage themselves in early employment in Kumasi, the Ashanti Region of Ghana. According to this study, 44% of juveniles who go into early employment needed money to buy textbooks, school uniforms or to pay for their school fees while 27% of them engaged in trading activities in order to supplement the household budget. Early employment of the young children, including students, is therefore the result of poverty that their parents suffer. Such an economic engagement ill-affects the students school attendance.

The impact of poverty on children's education in the third world countries has been outlined by Ekstrand (2015). His pessimistic view of educational performance of the students in these countries is that it is unlikely to be dramatically improved since the students are subjected to a number of factors which are beyond their control. To him, these students encounter three major problems in the home, namely:

- i. they experience chronic malnutrition from birth and they are educationally disadvantaged in that malnutrition affects the development of their brains.
- ii. they are a very important source of labour for their families. Girls for instance are expected to leave home early at not more than seven or eight years of age to engage in petty trading activities.

Although secondary education has been state funded, where the school fees per term may be up to four times the average monthly wage or salary of a male married worker, parents find it difficult to keep just a ward in school.

Birioukov (2016) concludes that poor health, child labour, and poverty militate against the ambitions of many third world students and their parents. It is indicative from the above literature that conditions of poverty or lower socio-economic status are strongly and consistently related to school failure and or attendance. This is primarily due to the fact that such unfortunate students in poverty-stricken homes are trapped and embittered by it and they are therefore constantly demotivated to keep themselves in school.

Darling & Hammond (2007) observes that children from low-income homes often begin school less well-prepared and have difficulty staying on grade level.

4.1.3 Child Labour

In a paper titled, "The peripheralization of youth in labour market: Problems Analyses and Opportunities: Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany", published in Contemporary Education Policy (2003), Bill Williamson submits that in both Britain and Germany, a significant number of young people are driven to the periphery of labour market (Bridgeford, Kitalong & Williamson, 2016). Such young people affected in this way typically are those who find very little that is positive in their experience of school. This effect (of child labour) underscores the reason for the global abhorrence.

According to Colwell, Woodward and Hutchinson (2018), employment of children in the local farm of Oxford Shire is the main cause of poor school attendance. The school board has the powers to take most irresponsible parents to court but the board is reluctant to prosecute the employers who employ the services of children since some of the school board members are also guilty of such offenses.

In the same way Lee and Kramer (2002) report that in a village in Bangladesh, children whose ages are around six years, work at tasks which do not require physical maturity such as gathering fuel, fetching water, and caring for the younger children. Boys aged eight or nine assume the responsibility of herding cattle and fishing; at the age of eleven years, they begin agricultural work and by age fourteen, they are capable of doing adult work. The parents do that to sustain the family's economic life. This makes the children experience low school attendance.

The widespread nature of child labour, especially in developing nations, despite its negative impact on children's education particularly with respect to attendance and performance is again demonstrated in a report presented by Ritchie and Roser (2019). According to their report, 4% of the world's population who are fifteen years or less participate in the labour force. Most of these working children live in the developing countries and normally work as unpaid family workers who help their families on the farm or in the small shops and commercial establishments. Children who work for third parties outside the family do not receive their wages. Rather, their parents get them. Their observation is that the economic environment of the parents compels the children to work instead of attending school. Even many such children who attend leave school before the normal closing time. This undoubtedly makes attendance low.

Fine (2018) laments over the fact that most African parents of today and parents of pre-industrial societies such as the fisher-folks, farmers and even the market women do not derive any pleasure in having their children in school. To such parents, it is an economic burden to send their children to school. To them if the children should stop attending school and instead help to perform some other jobs that could bring income to the home the better. Similar sentiment is expressed by Aldaba, Lanzona and Tamangan (2003) in their study report conducted in the rural communities of the Philippines. His observation is that in poor families, especially in the rural areas, child labour is very

necessary for the survival of the families. Children who work have little or no time to attend school and that beside that 15% of the boys and 9% of the girls in the rural areas work in the paid labour force and therefore cannot attend school. Besides, 6.3% also work in unpaid agricultural labour which affects their school attendance regularly.

Child labour does not prevail in rural communities only but also in urban centres. Ekpenyong, Sibiri and Island (2011) compared the incidence of child labour in rural and urban areas and concluded that the problems which rural working children encounter are exacerbated in urban settings. Whereas in the rural areas child labour is traditionally carried out within the context of the household, urban child labour takes place within an employer-employee structure. When children are incorporated in this structure, the parental protection that exists in domestic and aggression activities are generally absent. Urban child labourers work longer hours at strenuous and often dangerous tasks. Hence, the effect on their schooling is more considerable. Those who attend school are less industrious, less able and irregular in their attendance. This makes them to be at a disadvantage throughout their years and beyond.

It is indicated that in both rural and urban areas, children do not attend school regularly because of child labour. The children also lose their income if they do attend school and their parents perceive that the cost of earning income far outweighs the benefits of education (Ekpenyong, Sibiri & Island, 2011). Thus, it is really not uncommon to find students who are victims of child labour either making early appearance in school and cutting classes soon after or coming to school late and also leaving school earlier than normal closing hours.

Child labour, just as it is prevalent in several countries of the world, is common in both the rural and urban settlements of Ghana (Suleman, Hussain & Kayani, 2017). Even children who are between the ages of six and fourteen years are engaged in fetching water and carrying farm produce for household use. Such children normally assist their parents in domestic tasks such as farming and fishing instead of attending school. Sometimes, the children make appearance in school but quickly run away at any opportunity to join their parents in those domestic businesses. These activities are accepted as part of the processes which prepare the children to occupy adult roles and responsibilities.

It is said among the people of Otuom, in the Central Region of Ghana, that children who go to school are less of an asset than those who go fishing (Owusu-Kyeremaa, 2010). Most parents who are either fishermen or fishmongers encourage their children to help them in their fishing activities instead of allow them to go to school. The boys join the fishing crew and the income that accrues out of fishing is given to their parents. The young girls are also initiated into the fishing activities at a very early age. They help in the carrying, selling and the preservation of fish in order to supplement the family's income. It is therefore, not surprising to see those children truanting or completely absenting themselves from school. Franck (2007) thus concludes on a sad note that most parents who have their children at school regard them as "family parasites"

since their feeding; clothing and their total school expenditure become a drain on the financial resources of the family.

A study conducted by Suleman, Hussain and Kayani (2015) reveal certain marked characteristics identified with families that constitute a fertile breeding ground/environment for truancy. The following features were thus identified:

- i. families where parents suffer unemployment or irregular employment,
- ii. families where the father is away from home for long periods, either for reasons of work or other reasons;
- iii. families on low income;
- iv. families with an above average number of children;
- v. families overcoming or experiencing marital disharmony such as parental divorce or separation;
- vi. families in which the parents are un-cooperative and, or hostile to authority in general, and to school authorities in particular;
- vii. families where the parents are not interested in their children's progress in school; and
- viii. families where the parents do not insist that their children attend school or take no notice of their absence or do not insist on prompt arrival at school as manifested by their children over-sleeping, being late and disliking school journey.

The above literature reviewed under home environment as a causative factor of students' truancy produce a glaring picture that students with severe truancy problems typically have many inter-related problems that are outside the school's influence. According to Fine (2018), these problems which are, among other things, lack of parental supervision, abusive and non-supportive home environments, and parents with overwhelming problems of their own are frustrating because they cannot be resolved by the school.

4. 2 The School Factors that Contribute to Students' Truancy

The environment of a school obviously affects the students positively or negatively. A school with a poor, uncondusive and unfriendly learning environment usually hardly attracts its students' attention or enhances their engagement. In this section, the physical environment (or facilities), teachers' attitude as well as supervision would be considered.

4.2.1 The physical environment of the school

A number of factors relating to the physical environment can influence the students' school attendance. The school size, for example, is known to affect the participation of students whose grades are not very good. In schools with large classes academically marginal students often feel like outsiders, and they rarely get involved in school activities (Santoro, 2007).

A similar observation has been made by Mutekwe and Mutekwe (2013) who attribute school failure partly to the school system itself. They emphasize that children from an impoverished background often find that the school experience can be a frightening one in which constant testing and the threat of failure are clear and ever-present dangers **that** become an active force in leading to truancy and absenteeism.

It has been observed by Asikhia (2010), similarly, that a school's environment and surroundings as well as its academic performance can be justifiable causes of poor school attendance. **Old schools**, depriving, inadequately equipped and badly staffed are often characterized by over-crowding in the classrooms - resulting in impaired movement in class and lack of access to learning and recreational facilities. This condition makes students feel uncomfortable and bored. They become more susceptible to distractions and learning impairment. They develop **a** dislike for school and uncooperative behaviour at school. Many of them resort to truancy.

The World Bank Report (2008) indicates that in rural areas in Africa, most of the schools have dilapidated buildings and the school chairs, tables and desks are either broken or missing. The schools in question do not have good sanitation facilities and moreover, **the few** facilities have **been** poorly maintained. Such a condition consequently, affects academic standards and discourages students' attendance. The seriousness of the effect is that for those students who attend school, little can be learned and during the rainy season, classes have to be discontinued because of leaking roofs. Any school with this type of environment hardly escapes having to grapple with truancy and, or low attendance.

A research report by Glewwe and Kreme, (2006), indicates that **in** developing countries, the basic elements of an orderly school environment are missing. As a result of that, students and teachers are regularly absent. The report further discloses that the stocks of teaching material are limited and physical surroundings are so chaotic that it seems miraculous that learning occurs in the schools. To them, a student's ability to stay and learn in school is heavily influenced by the school's environment. The fact, **therefore**, is that if school facilities are clean, in good repair, and the needed teaching materials are made available, the teachers and students can be encouraged to work very hard to achieve and maintain a high academic performance.

Earlier, Santoro (2007), on the school environment in developing countries in general, and Tanzania and Sudan in particular, revealed that in developing countries, the schools are sometimes in a bad condition and do not possess the minimum sanitary facilities. **His** statistical analysis indicates that 42% of the schools in the Kilosa District in the United Republic of Tanzania do not have access to good drinking water and 10% do not have latrines which the students use. In the Ed Dueim District in Sudan, 20% of the schools in the Sefi Region of Nepal have leaking roofs, only 28% have toilets and 20% are in the state of collapsing. According **to him**, the inadequate facilities available contributes to low school attendance and therefore affects academic performance.

A similar research finding views school support networks as weak for both students and teachers. Teachers may resent what they perceive as inadequate

encouragement, assistance and resources to do their job while students also feel that nobody at school cares about them (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Duodu (2003) admits that the school system itself may foster truancy especially where the students have to run shifts. Truancy is also dominant where the problem of overcrowding exists and where basic academic and recreational facilities, as well as proper canteen services, are either not existent or in bad state. For schools to minimize truancy there should be a warm accommodating environment to enhance engagement and increase the schools' holding power of academic excellence (Shah et al., 2012).

4.2.2 Teachers' Attitude

The importance of the teacher in the classroom cannot be underestimated. A teacher's attitude towards his or her work in the classroom as well as his or her students may influence the students positively or negatively (Suleman, Hussain & Kayani, 2017). For example, a teacher who is hard working and punctual and has a positive inclination towards students may inspire, motivate and encourage students to be punctual in class and learn effectively. On the other hand, a relaxed, lazy and usually absent teacher whose attitude to work and students is negative is likely to cause problems for his or her students in relation to school/class attendance. In other words, in most cases, students' learning and attendance problems that emanate from the classroom interactions are attributive mainly to teachers' behaviour and attitude.

A teacher's lackadaisical attitude to teaching results in a negative response from students which include truancy. It may also lead to the type of teaching which Perrott (2014), describes as "cold and aloof"; 'unplanned and slipshod 'dull and routine'. This nominal attitude when demonstrated by a teacher makes his or her teaching easily predictable by some students who may in turn 'endure' the teacher's lesson or opt for something else, if there is an opportunity.

Again, a repeated absence of a teacher in the classroom may induce in students, similar behaviour that goes a long way to make them truants. Teachers' negative attitude to students, often leading to abusive and provocative language, contributes immensely to student's truancy (Duodu, 2003). He has made the following unpleasant observation.

"Some pupils can and others cannot absorb a certain level of verbal abuse. The result might be a non-attendance of class during certain days and periods. In administering external discipline in school some teachers go beyond their limits. This can be manifested in excessive canning and other forms of harsh punishment. Some pupils might decide to play hide and seek with the teacher's excessive punishment. This eventually leads to truancy on the part of those pupils" (Duodu, 2003, p.50).

Cranley (2003) similarly asserts the seriousness of unwholesome behaviour and utterances toward especially low-achieving students in the school in the light of the students' response or reaction. To him, the child's failure in education evokes negative responses from important people in the child's life, including teachers, parents and even

prospective employers. These reactions help to solidify feelings of social inadequacy and, in some cases, lead the underachieving students into a pattern of chronic delinquency. This enormously affects their attendance to school or make them turn out truants.

It has been suggested by Franck (2007) that for effective teaching and learning, the atmosphere in the classroom must be friendly. The atmosphere should make students feel they can trust their teacher and that they should know by his/her attitude that he/she is ready to help them. This instils confidence in the students and tremendously attracts and retains them in the classroom. They (students) see, in effect, the interaction with their teachers quite fruitful. In many cases however, the atmosphere has been terrible and unfriendly in the classroom (Franck, 2007). Such hostile and suspicious atmosphere evoke fear and insecurity in students and make them become afraid to speak to their teachers, fearing to receive harsh words or a beating in return. The obvious repercussion is the students' lukewarm attitude or non-attendance at some classes.

Besides such dangerous aftermath of truancy, no serious education can ever be accomplished under such an atmosphere. Monchinski (2008) remarks that a dull student feels a hopeless failure; his life may be one of a humiliating round of rebuke, disgrace and punishment. He soon comes to dread the daily journey and that he is tempted to play truant for that brings his freedom and opportunities to enjoy mischief.

This is to say that the relationship that exists between teachers and students, and the attitude of teachers towards even the weak students is paramount. For a student who senses the absence of a good relationship between himself/herself and teachers, on the basis of dullness or academic weakness, he/she is bound to be absent from school or class in response to the situation.

4.2.3 Supervision within the Schools

Lampert (2010) describes supervision as the function in schools that draw together the discrete elements of instructional effectiveness into a whole school action. Supervision in the school is very necessary if the school is to set and maintain moral and academic standards that society applaud. The ultimate purpose for supervision within a school therefore, is to create favourable circumstances for learning which, in actual fact, are devoid of any avoidable hindrances, through a healthy working relationship within the school (Musa, 2014).

The immediate stakeholders of effective supervision within the school setting include the head of the institution, the staff and the student leaders. These individuals, by virtue of their administrative roles in the school, are responsible for ensuring that there is generally a conducive atmosphere for a free and an effective teaching and learning in the school. According to Duodu (2003), the school head is bound by his position to ensure that all students in his or her school benefit from all services the school provides without any hindrance. It is the administrative role of the head, in that regard, to promote cordial relationships between the staff and the students. On their part, the staff are not responsible for only imparting knowledge but also serve as counsellors to their students. For teachers to be effective in this role, Monchinski (2008) adds that, the individual

teachers ought to disabuse their minds about students' behaviour. And that will make them play the role of parents or surrogates to all students. The school system would assist students to accept and encourage one another in their schooling through clearly spelt out rules and regulations to guide students' conduct and relationships. The students must again be assisted to expose and uproot vices within their ranks, through the leadership roles they play.

The relevance of supervision lies in its role in making schooling effective. Lampert (2010), describes **an** effective school as one in which students progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake. In other words, **an** effective school adds extra value to its students' outcomes in comparison with other schools serving similar intakes. To Monchinski (2008) what brings the difference between an effective school and a less effective one is supervision. Supervision thus takes care of scrutinizing the curriculum, syllabuses, and contents of subject areas, teaching and learning materials in terms of appropriateness, quantity, quality, and time, the **available materials**, timetabling, students' school attendance and suitability of learning environment, and, above all, the teachers' knowledge, technical and social skills and methods of instruction.

Suleman, Hussain, and Kayani (2015) **outline** the following as the impact of supervision in schools

- i. supervision develops and updates teachers knowledge and competence
- ii. it improves attitudes to work and individuals in the school
- iii. it reduces the rate of irregular attendance, absenteeism, truancy and lateness of students
- iv. it enables the head to give an instant summative evaluation of both teachers and students under him or her
- v. it sets a right tone in the school for effective teaching and learning
- vi. it helps to achieve the school's set goals

Absence of effective supervision however, creates unpleasant situation which usually hinders the teaching and learning process and disturbs the tone of the school. For example, the view of Maynard (2006) is that truancy can be a problem when the school fails to implement a consistent policy on unexcused absences. This failure, very often comes when the established consequences for truancy and other misbehaviour are too severe: administrators may find themselves working to avoid imposing the penalty. On the other hand, when students find that there is no clear guidelines or relaxed implementation of penalties or loose supervision, some will try to find how much they can get away with.

Njoroge and Nyabuto (2014) have warned that guidance and counselling, as a process of supervision, should not be ignored or neglected in the school. Their reason is based on the fact that students who are **receiving insufficient** encouragement and guidance in their academic frustration are more likely to consider first, tardiness and truanting, and later discontinuing their studies.

Oluremi (2013) has identified from his classroom experience that the problem of chronic truancy and tardiness, on the part of students, emanates from three related factors, namely:

- i. There is no significant consequence for being tardy or truant in some schools
- ii. Students **do not** feel that they have lost important class time if they **are** truant or if they are a few minutes late.
- iii. Students may realize that they can sometimes get away with being truant or tardy, when there is loose supervision or **an** absence of effective supervision since that explicitly makes the school a healthy environment for truancy.

4.3 Students' Factors that Contribute to Truancy

Factors that influence this unreasonable absence are many and different, as already indicated earlier **and** variables within the individual student himself/herself may contribute to this behaviour. Accordingly, Van Breda (2014) identified students' factors contributing to truancy in schools to include the students' performance and attitude as well as peer group influence.

4.3.1 Students Performance and Attitude

Academic failure leads to psychological and behavioural dysfunction, which are the actual causes of anti-social behaviour since this failure helps reduce **the** self-esteem of such students.

Researches conducted by Robert and Lynd, on one hand, and Warner on another (Perrott, 2014) indicate that labelling of and discrimination against low-achievers in a school are prevalent in high schools. Such students who are repeatedly brushed off into a bin labelled 'non-readers', 'first-grade repeaters', 'opportunity class', 'poor students' and the like, immediately develop disinterestedness in academic work and run away from school.

Reid (2005) attributes students' truancy to a number of interrelated factors common with low-performing students. For instance, academically weak students rarely learn how to manage homework assignments, come to class with long lists of excuses, and have **a** difficult time with regular class work. Such low performers often have the perception that attendance does not make any difference and that being in school does not increase their chances of passing examinations **s** or improving academically. Truancy, therefore, **becomes** common characteristic **tic** of such non-achievers in the school.

A similar observation has been presented by Rothman (2001) that the school presents a set of academic challenges or demands to students. Consequently, the low-academic achievers, as a result of failing to meet these set of requirements, may become frustrated, tension gripped and befuddled obviously resorting to truancy and, finally

giving up schooling. In other words, to students who are constantly entangled in academic failure, the classroom becomes a place of frustration, discouragement and disgrace. Eventually, such students reject the system, resort to truancy initially and finally drop out.

Another study conducted by Ubogu (2014), also revealed that pressure and boredom are most often mentioned by students as negative aspects of school academic work. They further explained that pressure to meet academic standards that seem unattainable may lead to discouragement and truancy on the part of students. Eventually, they drop out of school. This observation is confirmed by Akummey (2003), that when students have low grades all the time, they become frustrated, see themselves as failures and seek to cover up their frustration in truancy.

Duodu (2003) also agrees that truancy occurs when students are unable to cope with the academic demands in school. He attributes low achievement mainly to mental retardation and, or visual or hearing impairment. Students' character and attitude have a role to play in truancy. In relation to this, Maynard (2006) attests to the fact that truants are identified with such vices as pilfering, fighting, and constant disrespectfulness and find life in school or class uncomfortable. They, therefore, resort to truancy to escape external discipline that may be intended as a corrective measure. To Rothman (2001) some students are truant as a result of disinterestedness in studies. In other words, students who have a negative attitude towards school and particular subjects may develop an aversion to school or the subjects in question and eventually decide to stay away from school when the 'distasteful' subjects are being taught.

4.3.2 Peer Group Influence

The Oxford Dictionary of English (2010) explains the concept, 'Peer group' in two different senses. It perceives the concept: first, as a term for a small group of friends or associates who share common values, interests and activities; and, second, as a term for virtually all persons of the same age- a definition which reflects the fact that schools tend to be age-graded. A similar description of the term is presented by Nelson (2007, p.29), stating that the child grows up in two social worlds. One of such worlds is the adult world constituting the child's parents, teachers and other relatives with whom the child has an interaction. In the second group, they identified the world of the child's peers or age groups which comprises his or her friends, playmates, clubs, gangs, and school groups.

The peer group influence then depicts the influence that friends (or members of these groups) exercise on one another. The term also implies the influence exerted by a much wider category of age-mates. Hargreaves and Fullan (2014) admit that there are groups in which it is mandatory that everybody who is on the 'in' must be scornful of the school and rebellious towards teachers.

Within the context of the school, peer groups may emerge from students who have entered the school already sharing sub-cultural values which influence attitudes to school and educational achievements; and the school itself plays an active role in the formation of subcultures and friendship groups - especially in the formation of

oppositional or counter-cultural groups whose members are alienated by their group attitudes and aspirations within the school setting (Nelson, 2007, p.42).

In the USA, according to Hanushek et al., (2003), peer group influence is reported to be a major factor that determines whether students will go to school or not. It is further declared that most adolescents like to do what their friends have been doing and that if friends have been dropping out of school, for example, to get work to do which earns them good income, they will be persuaded to do likewise. A strong peer group influence or pressure can affect students' school attendance, hence students who become acculturated into a pattern of life that rejects education or join a delinquent group that rebels against the established system of education are strongly influenced by the peer groups to be out of school.

Boone and Van Houtte (2013) carried out an observation on twelve non-academically achieving students in a school in England and the study revealed that the boys absented themselves from class after registration and they were able to communicate with their members to get out of class using signs. This behaviour contributed to poor attendance among the boys. Again, in England, Han et al., (2008) reported that "peer groups have powerful influences on a child's school life". A case is cited of a student who committed suicide after a period of absence from school. The child was affected by a complexity of influences by peers and by bullying at school.

Though peer group influence may exert a positive influence (where the group exists for a good purpose) the negative influence is often very serious. MacGillivray & Mann-Erickson (2006) state that "children who fail at school soon feel frustrated, angry, and rejected, believing they will never achieve success through conventional means and so look out for like-minded companions and together engage in antisocial behaviours". This assertion also discloses that constant academic failure is a condition of students that often leads students to join such negative peer groups.

Oluremi (2006) also discloses another effect of peer influence which is not necessarily through joining a clique in school. To him, individuals may also be teased, especially when they are low achievers in class, or they may be bullied. The effect of teasing or being jeered at by school or classmates normally is condemnation, rejection, and alienation. The victim resorts to truancy since he or she feels unpopular in a class all the time. The above related literature makes it explicitly indicative that though there are home and school factors that are responsible for truancy among students in school, the students themselves may be a factor contributing to truancy.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, truancy is one of the myriads of educational problems that have over the years hardly evaded the attention of many writers around the globe. Truancy is a repeated practice of avoiding or running away from school or class to engage in some activities or have one's way, sometimes without the knowledge or notice of teachers. Generally, truancy is more of an attitude or a 'delinquency' or at least a "difficulty of adjustment" than a mere non-attendance. The preoccupation of this chapter is to review

relevant literature on the factors that influence truancy among students. Aspects of literature considered include; the definition of truancy, the prevalence of truancy in schools and causes or factors responsible for truancy. These include; home factors, school factors, and student factors. The reality of truancy in Ghanaian schools is confirmed by researchers with basically six different manifestations, occurring at different periods in the life of a truant student. Researchers are inconclusive about the causes of this unfortunate phenomenon, though they reveal that variables within the individual and his or her family, home, neighbourhood and school are likely to be important causative factors.

It is therefore recommended that student personal and family concerns, such as parent-child or teacher-student conflict, should be addressed through school guidance and counselling services. Remedial and tutorial services can help to lessen the academic challenges that frequently cause students to miss class. In addition, regular education through the Parents' Association (P.A.) should be conducted to inspire parents to demonstrate their devotion to their children's education.

We are also of the opinion that both teachers and students should be subjected to stricter discipline. To this end, suspensions and other forms of discipline must be used on students, and they must be closely watched in order to establish and maintain good attendance. Furthermore, there is the greater need for schools to prioritize the development of infrastructure, such as fence walls and canteen services, as these can assist keep students in school throughout the academic year and ultimately help them become literate, responsible, and productive citizens.

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