

# PSYCHO-DEMOGRAPHIC PREVALENCE OF TRUANCY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN THE THE IHIALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE

## Abstract

The study investigated the Psycho-demographic prevalence of truancy among adolescence in The Ihiala local government area of Anambra State. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The sample of 300 students was used for the study using simple random sampling (balloting). Four research questions were answered while four hypotheses were tested in the study. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire tagged “Psycho-demographic prevalence of Truancy Questionnaire (PDPTQ)”. The data collected were analyzed with mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested with z-test. From the analysis, it was concluded that male exhibit truant behaviour than female students. Also, the finding of the study showed that fear significantly influence prevalence of truancy among adolescence students in The Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Parents and guardians should collaborate with school authorities and teachers to monitor students in and out of school compound to reduce the incidence of truancy

**Key Words:** Prevalence of truancy, gender, fear and adolescent

## Introduction

Education is a combination of deliberate and purposeful acts and activities with formative and intervention effects on the behaviour and character of an individual. Hence, schools are established as the agents of society to mould the habits, interests and feelings of children and transmit the societal norms, culture, values and traditions 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 extra-curricular activities. This voluntary absence from school and dodging lessons often is referred to as truancy.

The word truant behaviour means “Run away from classes” and the students who always tend to keep themselves away from studies and avoid attending classes are called truants (Gosain, 2013). Chukwuka, (2013) defines truancy as “absence from school for no legitimate reason”. Adekunle, (2015) added that truancy involves intentionally absenting of

oneself from school without permission, leaving without authorization and dodging of specific lesson periods. According to Gabb (2015) a truant leaves home but either does not get to school or escapes from school or class to engage in any other activities he/she fancies. Gullant and Lemonie (2017) also opined that truancy is avoidance behaviour towards school as a result of the existence of other reinforcing activities outside the school or home. Truancy has been linked to serious delinquent activity in youths and this significant negative behaviour has potentials to curtail the possibilities of meaningful academic achievement.

Therefore, it is clear that in a situation where a student absent himself from school without any concrete reason and the parents are not aware about it can be regarded as truant behaviour (Abayomi, 2012). When a child tends to get involved in acts such as running away from school, he may not have time to concentrate on his or her studies, whereby hurts the academic performance of such a child. This will make such a child neglect his intended goals and if this happens, such a child will not be able to concentrate on his/her education and his/her career will come to a standstill. In a situation where a child is always playing truancy, such a child will miss a lot of lessons and definitely will not know anything being taught by the teacher. As a result, such a child will never achieve any goal in his/her education and career.

Hence, truancy is a predictor of multiple risk behaviours among adolescents like sexual practices, illicit drug use, alcoholism, cigarette smoking and other acts of anti-social behaviours (James, 2018). It has been suggested that the unsupervised time the adolescents have when they are truants allows them to initiate and maintain unhealthy behaviours. Truancy in childhood may be also associated with adverse social and health outcomes later in life. Truant behaviour may lead a child to become a hardened criminal in a future life, if not curbed (Ela, 2012). Studies have reported that adults who were truants as adolescents were more likely to experience marital or job instability and psychological maladjustment when

compared to their counterparts who were not truants at their adolescent stage (Kario, 2012; Kento, 2017).

This raises the question of whether the prevalence of truant behaviour is found among students in The Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State. The staggering high rate of students' truant behaviour in school is made more poignant by diverse reports. Wisconsin (2010), for instance, reported that approximately 15,600 or 1.6 percent of students missed school on any given day in Wisconsin public schools. In New York City's public school Garry (2011) reported that about 1 million students skipped school on a typical day in the nation's largest school, while an average of 62,000 or 10% of those enrolled in the nation's second-largest public school are out of the school each day. Although accurate reports on the number of students who skip school on a typical day in Nigeria are presently unavailable. Chukwuka, (2013) were of the view that students running away from school are either running from something or running to something. Harsh teachers, negative school experiences such as bullying, boring classes, un-conducive school environment, indiscipline prevalent in the school, lack of interesting and co-curricular activities and location of the school may be the causes of truancy or run away from school among students.

However, truancy rates across time were slightly different between boys and girls. Attwood and Croll (2017) stated that as children get older, the likelihood of truancy also increases. The study revealed that girls are less likely than boys to truant during their early developmental years and are more likely to truant than boys when they get older. Males have consistently greater truancy rates than girls, although females are twice as likely as males to be absent with parental consent. Female truants claimed to engage in less anti-social behaviour than male truants, whereas male truants have a more unfavourable perception of school than female truants, a characteristic that is assumed to contribute to the greater rates of male truancy observed in practically every study available for evaluation (Baskerville, 2019).

When McIntosh (2020) says that girls are more likely than guys to be late, he agrees. This could be because women take more time for body and face maintenance as well as make-up application. In addition, Pengpid and Peltzer (2019) discovered that gender had an impact on truant behaviour among secondary school adolescents in their study. They assert that males are more likely to play truant during adolescence than their female counterparts.

Furthermore, fear may also influence truancy among students. Sometimes, there's no clear cause of fear but problems at school or home can contribute to a child's fear about school. At school, children may have truancy after experiencing Bullying, teasing or threats of physical harm from other children, fear of criticism, punishment or ridicule from a teacher or other school staff, learning difficulties, such as dyslexia (difficulty with reading and language) or dyscalculia (difficulty understanding math and numbers), Worry or intense fear about catastrophic events, such as fear of a school shooting. While truant children are bored with school, or angry about having to go, school refusal is caused by something different. Anxiety is the driver behind this behaviour, which is also sometimes called school phobia.

Truant behaviour in childhood may be associated with adverse social and health outcomes later in life. Studies have reported that adults who were truant as adolescents were more likely to experience marital or job instability and psychological maladjustment when compared to their counterparts who were not truant as adolescents (Azizi Yahya, 2010). Meanwhile, other scholars have focused on the effect of absenteeism on academic performance. In light of the above trends of studies, this study tends to fill this gap by examining the psycho-demographic prevalence of truancy among adolescents in the Ihiala local government area of Anambra State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The school is built purposely as the agent of society to mould the habits, interests, attitudes and feelings of children and transmit the societal norms, culture, values and

traditions from one generation to another. Despite this, some students still do not attend school classes. Many of our youths now run away from schools while in many cases, the parents believe they are attending school classes. While they are away from school, they exercise freedom in engaging in a lot of juvenile delinquencies like fighting, drug abuse and other anti-social behaviours.

This situation in our schools is highly worrisome. For years now, the school system has been encountered by several truancy. These problems affect instruction, administration and overall performance of students. It also affects academic performance in both internal and external examinations. When students leave the school unauthorized, they are seen in unwanted places, on the streets, market places which have made them engage in bullying, fighting, rape, fagging, cultism and so on that has affected teaching and learning adversely and made the learning environment no longer interesting to both the teacher and the students. It is a concern that the researcher intended to work on the psycho-demographic prevalence of truancy behaviour among adolescents in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State.

### **Aim and Objectives of the study**

The study aims to examine the Psycho-demographic prevalence of truancy among adolescence in the Ihiala local government area of Anambra State. Specifically, this study intends to;

1. Investigate the extent gender influences the prevalence of truancy among adolescent students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State.
2. Determine the extent fear influencesthe prevalence of truancy among adolescent students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will guide this study

1. To what extent does gender influences prevalence of truancy among adolescence

students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State?

2. To what extent does fear influence the prevalence of truancy among adolescent students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses formulated and testable at 0.05 alpha level of significance guided the study:

1. Gender does not significantly influence the prevalence of truancy among adolescent students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State.
2. Fear does not significantly influence the prevalence of truancy among adolescent students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State

### **Methodology**

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The area of study is the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State. The population of the study consist of the total number of public secondary schools in the area is (17) with an estimated population of 10,819 students with a sample size of 300 students from 10 selected schools in the local government area. 30 students will be selected from each of the schools. The researcher will randomly and independently select the participants for the study using simple random sampling (balloting). Self-constructed instrument titled; “Psycho-demographic Prevalence of Truancy Questionnaire (PDPTQ)” was used, comprised of a 4-point Likert scale format was used as an instrument for collecting data from the respondents. The instrument was validated and has a high face, content and construct validity and is suitable for the study. The reliability coefficient of the entire instrument was determined and found to be 0.82 using Pearson product-moment. Data analysis was carried out using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics using SPSS version 23 and presented on a single table for both research questions and hypotheses. It was tested at 0.05 alpha level.

### **Data Analysis**

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does gender influences prevalence of truancy among adolescence students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State

**Hypotheses 1:** Gender does not significantly influence the prevalence of truancy among adolescence students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State.

**Table 1: Z-test summary of gender prevalence on truancy among students**

Categories	N	Mean	SD	z-value	2-tailed value	Remarks
Female	150	3.00	.65	-703	.482	significant
Male	150	3.02	.35			

$p > 0.05$

The result of the z-test of differences in gender in Table 1 compared the mean level of female of 3.00 with that of male students of 3.02. This test yielded a z-value of -703, which was found to be significant at a 2-tailed value of .492. Since this significant value is greater than 0.05 which was used in testing the hypothesis; the test is considered not significant. Since the mean for males (3.02) is higher than that of males, (3.00), it means, the male prevalence of truancy is higher than that of females in the Ihiala local government area of Anambra state.

**Research Question 4:** To what extent does fear influence the prevalence of truancy among adolescent students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State

**Hypotheses 4:** Fear does not significantly influence the prevalence of truancy among adolescent students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State

**Table 2: Z-test summary of fear prevalence of truancy among students**

Categories	N	Mean	SD	z-value	2-tailed value	Remarks
Truancy	122	2.28	.70	2.720	.007	Significant
Fear	178	2.16	.35			

$P > 0.05$

The result of the z-test of differences in Table 2 compared the mean level of truancy is 2.28 with that of fear is 2.16. This test produced a z-value of 2.720, which was found to be significant at a 2-tailed value of 0.007. Since this significant value is greater than 0.05 that was used in testing the hypothesis, the test is considered not significant. Since the mean for fear (2.28) is higher than that of truancy (2.16), it means that there is high prevalence of truancy among students due to fear in the Ihiala local government area of Anambra state.

### **Summary of Findings**

The results obtained after data analysis are summarized below:

1. The finding of the study revealed that there is higher prevalence of truancy in male than female among adolescence students in the Ihiala local government area of Anambra state.
2. The finding of the study showed that fear significantly influence prevalence of truancy among adolescence students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State

### **Discussion of Findings**

The finding of the study revealed that there is higher prevalence of truancy in male than female among adolescence students in the Ihiala local government area of Anambra state. this present study is in agreement with the previews study by Malcolm (2021) who pointed that the number of learners in secondary schools admitting truancy was almost equal for boys and girls, the variation that exists in truancy levels of males and females is slight. Thought is slightly higher in boys than girls.

The finding of the study showed that fear significantly influence prevalence of truancy among adolescence students in the Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State. In agreement with this study by Reids (1999) who reported that At school, children may have truancy after experiencing Bullying, teasing or threats of physical harm from other children, fear of criticism, punishment or ridicule from a teacher or other school staff, earning difficulties, such as dyslexia (difficulty with reading and language) or dyscalculia (difficulty

understanding math and numbers), Worry or intense fear about catastrophic events, such as fear of a school shooting.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that male exhibit truant behaviour than female students. The finding of the study showed that fear significantly influence prevalence of truancy among adolescence students in The Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State

### **Recommendation**

The following recommendations were made base on the findings of the study.

1. Parents and guardians should collaborate with school authorities and teachers to monitor students in and out of school compound to reduce the incidence of truancy.
2. Parents should be interested in the peer group or friends their child move with or keep and watch their activities with keen interest.
3. Teacher, Parents and the school principals should endeavour to be steadfast and be concerned with the task of making students to be responsible and discipline right from the youth, so that the nations expectation on them as future leaders may be attained.
4. The school authorities should put in place negative sanctions or punishments such as internal suspension with hard labour to truant students to serve as a deterrent to others.
5. Guidance and counselling coordinators in second-cycle schools should do well to meet truant students from time to time and counsel them on the need to be punctual in class and to participate in teaching and learning
6. School administrators and teachers should check lateness and absenteeism among secondary school students. Student with high record of attendance should openly be rewarded in order to motivate students with the poor attendance records
7. The Ministry of Education and State Secondary Education Board should develop guidelines for the formulation of effective attendance policies in secondary schools to check truancy behaviour among students.

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