



Emotional Disposition and Self-esteem as Correlates of Truancy among Secondary School Students in Rivers South East Senatorial District

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated emotional disposition and self-esteem as correlates of truancy among secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Correlational research design was adopted in the study. Population of the study consisted of 6,268 senior secondary school two (SSS 2) students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers South East Senatorial District. Sample size for the study was 376 (182 male and 194 female SSS 2 students) which were determined using Taro Yamane's formula. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample size. However, out of the 376 respondents, only 370 returned the instruments which were used for data analysis. Emotional Disposition and Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEDSQ) and Students' Truancy Questionnaire (STQ) were used for data collection. The face and content validities of the instruments were determined by the supervisor and one other expert in Measurement and Evaluation in the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. Cronbach Alpha formula was used to obtain the following reliability coefficients: 0.73 for cluster A and 0.77 for cluster B, and 0.75 for the entire STQ, while test-retest method was used to obtain the reliability coefficient of 0.82 for the Students' Truancy Questionnaire. Research questions were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r), while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant using t-transformation method. Results showed that emotional disposition and self esteem have negative relationship with truancy among secondary school students. It was recommended that: School environment needs to be conducive for learning so as to encourage positive emotional dispositions among the students, which could lead to reduction in students' truancy; and there should be functional counselling units in schools that could help to guide, counsel and follow-up truant students so as to change their general attitudes and feelings (self esteem) about school positively with the view of eradicating truancy amongst the students.

INTRODUCTION

Attendance is an important factor in school success among learners (Ready, 2010). Attendance to school is necessary because according to Onoyase (2017) educational institutions all over the world (either public or private) have been established on the premise that learners will attend classes regularly and teachers will impart knowledge to them and thereby bring about positive behavioural changes. Kearney and Grazyk (2014) reiterated that regular attendance in school is very vital for students' academic achievement, language development and social development. Regular attendance and being punctual to school would not only enable the learners to keep abreast of educational development in the school but also make them to mature and progress in other areas (e.g. affective and cognitive) that are associated with academic development in schools (Adam, 2015). However, observations have shown that some secondary school students indulge in truancy instead of attending school regularly without minding its future implications on them, their families and the society at large. In fact, truancy has become a common discipline problem globally (Suhid & Aroff, 2012).

Bazemore, Stindcomb and Leip cited in Eremie and Nwala (2018) defined truancy as unlawful absence from school without parental knowledge. While Eremie and Nwala (2018) described truancy as unapproved absence from school, usually without a parent's knowledge, Okwakpam and Okwakpam (2012) viewed truancy as students who attend school but do not go to classes. Truancy is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the educational programmes and has caused a lot of setbacks for secondary school students in their educational pursuits (Animashaun in Eremie & Nwala, 2018). Truancy is a risk factor that can jeopardize the future educational and career aspirations of the truants and also threaten the peace and growth of the family (ies) of the truants in particular and the society at large due to its adverse implications. As a risk factor for delinquency, truancy is found to be related to substance abuse, gang activity and involvement in criminal activities (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2011).

However, researchers have identified some of the factors causing truancy such as inability to do homework, illness, lack of social competence, physical health, low self-esteem, poor peer relationship, low academic ability (Hopskins, Green & Burns, 2011; Maduabuchi, 2013), psychological, environmental, school environmental and prenatal environment (Odiase & Ekedama, 2017) and made some suggestions for curbing the rate of truancy among students, but it seems that not much progress has been recorded. Thus, there is need to investigate educational disposition and self-esteem as correlates of truancy among secondary school students.

Emotional disposition could determine truancy among students. Maitra (2005) stated that physical and emotional sickness in students result in mental and development disorder which includes depression, anxiety, aggressiveness, antisocial behavior, suicidal attempts, alcohol and drug abuse, and these behavioral disorders may lead to poor school performance, low self-esteem and eventually causes truant behaviour. Students who are emotionally disturbed act against the rules and regulations of the school, family and society (Oliha & Audu, 2010). Obe as cited in Uhuegbu (2018) opined that physically disabled individuals are more frequently maladjusted than normal ones and tend to experience frustration when confronted with tasks which they feel inadequate, shy, timid, withdrawn or even develop inferiority complex caused by their own self- concept. Such students will either suppress or sort out their emotions, adopting different behaviours either positively or negatively. Truants demonstrate poor emotional adjustments that affect their relationship among their peers (Plummer, 2015). Tyler (2018) expressed that those students with high attendance and achievement succeeded not because they were given "tokens" for achieving well but because they felt a personal connection to their school and felt that they were an important part of the daily "life" of the school.

Self-esteem is a psychological factor of interest in this study. Self-esteem tends to have become a household construct which drive the behaviours, decisions and actions of most people, especially the teens in recent times (Ndimele & Eremie, 2018). Self-esteem refers to a person's general attitude and feelings toward him/ herself. Dunning and Sherman in Ndimele and Eremie (2018) defined self-esteem as a personal sense of ability that is fundamental to an individual's identity; a motivation engine that powers ones cognitive machinery. Individuals with low self-esteem are always worried about making a mistake, and they have a strong tendency to avoid people (Myers, 2005). On the other hand, high self-esteem individuals are likely to develop strong confidence, and have the ability to associate freely as well as express their feelings with confidence. Self-esteem can influence a person's behaviour, actions, learning ability and outcomes (Ndimele & Eremie, 2018). While Reids (2012) revealed that lower levels of self-esteem make some learners more prone to absenteeism than their peers, Somer (2011) argued that there is no link between truancy and low self-esteem. Sadaat, Ghasemzadeh and Soleimani (2012) emphasized that appraisal of the effects of self-esteem is complicated by several factors, because many people with high self-esteem exaggerate their successes and good traits. This calls for indebt empirical research works as to establish the relationship between self-esteem and truancy among students. In the light of the above background, it is evident that emotional disposition and self-esteem are critical issues as long as truancy among secondary school students is concerned. Regrettably, in Rivers State of Nigeria, there seems to be scanty empirical studies on the relationship between educational disposition, self-esteem and truancy among students in secondary schools, and this makes this present study imperative.

Statement of the Problem

Truancy seems to have become one of the major problems amongst secondary school students in recent times. There are students that may report in school but sneak out after a few lessons and spend the rest of the school day outside engaging in delinquent activities (Onoyase, 2017). Studies have shown that factors such as psychological, school environmental and prenatal environment (Odiase & Ekedama, 2017) are strongly predictive of truancy. Could truancy among students also be linked to emotional disposition and self-esteem of the students? In order to provide answers to this problem, this study therefore, investigated emotional disposition and self-esteem as correlates of truancy among secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between emotional disposition, self-esteem and truancy among secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the relationship between emotional disposition and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District.
2. Determine the relationship between self-esteem and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What is the relationship between emotional disposition and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District?
2. Is there any relationship between self esteem and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between emotional disposition and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District.
2. There is no significant relationship between self esteem and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design of the Study

The study adopted the correlational research design. According to Eremie (2003), the correlational research design is used to determine the relationships between two or more variables. The correlational design provides clues for the proper understanding of patterns of relationships among variables of the study (Okwo & Walson, 2016). The correlational research design was therefore, considered suitable for this study because the researcher was interested in investigating the relationship between the independent variables (emotional disposition and self esteem) and the dependent variable (truancy among secondary school students) in Rivers South East Senatorial District without manipulating the variables.

Area of the Study

In terms of the geographical area, the study was carried out in Rivers South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Rivers South East Senatorial District is made up of seven Local Government Areas with sixty-eight public senior secondary schools, while in terms of content area, the study focused on emotional disposition and self esteem as they relate to truancy among secondary school students. However, the study only covered the public senior secondary schools in Rivers South East Senatorial District.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 6,268 senior secondary school two (SSS 2) students in all the 71 public senior secondary schools in Rivers South East Senatorial District in Rivers State. The population of the study was made up of 3,050 male students and 3,218 female students in all the 71 public senior secondary schools in Rivers South East Senatorial District for 2019/2020 academic session (Source: Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board, Port Harcourt, 2019).

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size of the study consisted of 376 (182 male and 194 female) senior secondary school two (SSS 2) students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. While the sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane's formula, the stratified random sampling technique was used to select 182 male and 194 female SSS 2 students making a total of 376 SSS 2 students (respondents) selected as sample size for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

In the study, two self-structured instruments titled: Students' Emotional Disposition and Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEDSQ) and Students' Truancy Questionnaire (STQ) were used for data collection

Students' Emotional Disposition and Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEDSQ)

The Students' Emotional Disposition and Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEDSQ) consisted of sections A and B. Section A focused on the respondents' personal data, while section B centered on emotional disposition and self-esteem of students. Section B was made up of two clusters with 12 items (6 items in each cluster) prepared on a four point scale of Strongly Disagreed with 1 point, Disagreed 2 points, Agreed with 3 points and Strongly Agreed with 4 points.

Students' Truancy Questionnaire (STQ)

The Students' Truancy Questionnaire (STQ) was used for data collection on truancy among secondary school students. The STQ consisted of sections A and B. While Section A focused on the respondents' personal data, section B centered elicited information on truancy among secondary school students. Section B consisted of 10 items prepared on a four point scale of Strongly Disagreed with 1 point, Disagreed 2 points, Agreed with 3 points and Strongly Agreed with 4 points.

Validation of the Instruments

The two instruments- Students' Emotional Disposition and Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEDSQ) and Students' Truancy Questionnaire (STQ) used for data collection were validated by two experts in Guidance and Counselling, and Measurement and Evaluation all from the Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworokwo, Port Harcourt. The experts ascertained the face and content validity of the instruments by scrutinizing the instruments in terms of their clarity, suitability of the language, content coverage, adequacy and relevance of the items in addressing the research questions, and made relevant corrections and modifications which formed the basis for the final print out of the instruments.

Reliability of the instruments

To establish the reliability coefficients of the instruments, the researchers administered 30 copies of the Students' Emotional Disposition and Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEDSQ) and Students' Truancy Questionnaire (STQ) to 30 selected SSS 2 students in two different public senior secondary schools in Rivers East Senatorial District which are not part of the area of the study. The responses of the respondents were recorded and coded accordingly. While the test-retest method was used to obtain the reliability coefficient of 0.82 for the Students' Truancy Questionnaire (STQ), the Cronbach Alpha method was used with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 to obtain the reliability coefficients of 0.73 for cluster A and 0.77 for cluster B, and 0.75 for the entire STQ.

Method of Data Analysis

The research questions were analyzed with the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r), while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant using the t-transformation or t-distribution formula. In results interpretation, null hypothesis was rejected when t-transformation (t-trans) value was greater than the critical t-value. On the other hand, null hypothesis was accepted when t-transformation (t-trans) value was less than the critical t-value.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between emotional disposition and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District?*

Data for answering this research question is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Relationship between Emotional Disposition and Truancy among Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers South East Senatorial District

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r	Remark
				$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$			
Emotional Disposition	370	17.60	3.10	6512	118162	259607	-0.088	Negative
Truancy among Students	370	39.94	4.47	14776	597468			

Table 1 above presents the relationship between emotional disposition and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District. Results in Table 1 above shows that there is a negative relationship between emotional disposition and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District with $r = -0.088$.

Research Question 2: *What is the relationship between self esteem and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District?*

Data for answering this research question is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Relationship between Self Esteem and Truancy among Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers South East Senatorial District

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r	Remark
				$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$			
Self esteem	370	15.48	2.89	5728	91768	228424	-0.068	Negative
Truancy among students	370	39.94	4.47	14776	597468			

Table 2 above reveals the relationship between self esteem and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District. From the results in Table 2 above, it can be observed that the relationship between self esteem and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District is negative with r-value = -0.068.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between emotional disposition and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District.

Table 3: PPMC and T-test Analysis of Relationship between Emotional Disposition and Truancy among Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers South East Senatorial District

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	r	t-trans	t-crit	α	Remarks
Emotional Disposition	370	17.60	3.10	368	-0.088	-1.68	1.96	0.05	NS
Truancy among students	370	39.94	4.47						

NS = Not Significant at 0.05 Significance Level

Table 3 above revealed that at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom (df) of 368, r-value = -0.088, t-trans = -1.68 and t-crit = 1.96. Since t-transformation value of -1.68 < t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between emotional disposition and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between self esteem and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District.

Table 4: PPMC and T-test Analysis of Relationship between Self Esteem and Truancy among Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers South East Senatorial District

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	r	t-trans	t-crit	α	Remark
Self esteem	370	15.48	2.89	368	-0.068	-1.30	1.96	0.05	NS
Truancy among students	370	39.94	4.47						

NS = Not Significant at 0.05 Significance Level

Results in Table 4 above indicates that at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom (df) of 368, r-value = -0.068, t-trans = -1.30 and t-crit = 1.96. Since t-transformation value of -1.30 < t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between self esteem and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the results of research question 1 as shown in Table 1, it was observed that there is a negative relationship between emotional disposition and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District. Also, results in hypothesis 2 as shown in Table 3 showed that the relationship between emotional disposition and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District is not statistically significant. The finding of this study could be because some students tend to experience negative emotional disposition toward their studies because they lack the interest and ability to work hard for success to be achieved, while students who experience stable disposition interact positively among peers hence avoid alienation. Oliha and Audu (2010) also supported the finding of the study when they revealed that students who are emotionally disturbed act against the rules and regulations of the school, family and society. However, Tyler (2018) expressed that those students with high attendance and achievement succeeded not because they were given “tokens” for achieving well but because they felt

a personal connection to their school and felt that they were an important part of the daily “life” of the school. Also, poor health care, mental imbalance, psychiatric disturbances and the feeling of lack of control over life can cause a student to become a truant (Okwakpam & Okwakpam, 2012). Truants demonstrate poor emotional adjustments that affect their relationship among their peers (Plummer, 2015).

From the results of research question 2 as shown in Table 2, it was observed that there was a negative relationship between self-esteem and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District. Furthermore, the results in hypothesis 2 as shown in Table 4 showed that there was no significant relationship between self esteem and truancy among public senior secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District. This finding could be attributed to the submission of Sadaat, Ghasemzadeh and Soleimani (2012) that appraisal of the effects of self-esteem is complicated by several factors, because many people with high self-esteem exaggerate their successes and good traits, hence they emphasized objective measures of outcomes. Sadaat, Ghasemzadeh and Soleimani claimed that high self esteem is also a heterogeneous category, encompassing people who frankly accept their good qualities along with narcissistic, defensive, and conceited individuals. This finding is also in agreement with Somer (2011) who noted that there is no link between truancy and low self-esteem. In addition, Sadaat, Ghasemzadeh and Soleimani (2012) revealed that high self-esteem does not prevent children from smoking, drinking, taking drugs, or engaging in early sex. Contrarily, Ndimele and Eremie (2018) stated that self-esteem can influence a person’s behaviour, actions, learning ability and outcomes. Individuals with low esteem tend to be more nervous, feel shy and awkward, conspicuous and can hardly express themselves with confidence, especially in a mixed multitude or social environment such as school.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it can be observed that emotional disposition and self-esteem have negative relationships with truancy among secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District. Therefore, it can be deduced that emotional disposition and self-esteem makes little or no contribution to truancy among secondary school students in Rivers South East Senatorial District. Thus, truancy among secondary school students in recent times could strongly be linked to other psychological factors which are not considered in this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School environment needs to be conducive for learning so as to encourage positive emotional dispositions among the students, which could lead to reduction in students’ truancy.
2. There should be functional counselling units in schools that could help to guide, counsel and follow-up truant students so as to change their general attitudes and feelings (self esteem) about school positively with the view of eradicating truancy amongst the students.

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