



Analysis of Positive Punishment and Negative Punishments as Predictors of Truancy Reduction among Senior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzed positive and negative punishments as predictors of truancy reduction among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria. Correlational research design was adopted. Population of the study was 47,297 senior secondary school students in all the 37 public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Sample of the study was 397 SSS 2 students determined using Taro Yamane's sample size formula. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample of the study. Two instruments developed by the researcher titled "Punishment Techniques for Truancy Reduction Questionnaire" and "Truancy among Students Questionnaire" were used for data collection. The face and content validity of the instruments were determined by three experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. Cronbach Alpha method was used to obtain the reliability coefficients of 0.76 and 0.74 for the two clusters of Punishment Techniques for Truancy Reduction Questionnaire, while test-rest method was used for Truancy among Students Questionnaire which yielded 0.82 reliability coefficient. Results showed that: positive punishment and negative punishment significantly predicts truancy reduction among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria to a high extent. It was recommended that: the use of positive punishment for truancy reduction should be with serious caution even though it predicts truancy reduction since it is capable of inflicting injury on the truants, and that negative punishment should be used as alternative to corporal punishment for reduction of truancy among students for better results.

Keywords: Reinforcement, positive punishment, negative punishment, Truancy Reduction

INTRODUCTION

School is not just an environment for learning of how to read and write as some students perceive. It is an organized setting which helps in shaping a student's learning behaviour, equip him/her with relevant knowledge and skills and orientations, as well as conditioning the student's mind set towards positive thinking for positive impact in the society. The school and education generally stand as the basic foundation for human capital development, socio-economic and technological growth of any given society. To this effect, it is important for all students to attend school regularly and punctually if they are to enjoy fully all the benefits of schooling and education generally. However, the issue of truancy

observed among some students in recent times makes one to wonder how and when these students will begin to exploit from all that the school environment has to offer. Eremie and Nwala (2018) viewed truancy as an unapproved absence from school, usually without a parent's knowledge.

According to Olakojo and Adetoyose (2020), truancy has become a major problem that cuts across all levels of education in Nigerian schools, because it negates the reason behind the policy of education for all. As noted by Onoyase (2017), skipping of classes by students has become like a monster plaguing the educational system and may be comparable to examination malpractice that also seems to have defied all solutions. In fact, the issue of truancy among students in public secondary schools has become a great source of worry to stakeholders in education particularly the parents, school management and the government in Rivers State in particular and other state in Nigeria in general. Onoyase (2017) expressed that the incidence of truancy appears to be on the increase as efforts made by various stakeholders may not have yielded the desired results. Could this be that reinforcement techniques are yet to be effectively utilized in attempt to reducing cases of school truancy in our schools and communities? It is on this note that the researchers sought to analyze positive punishment and negative punishment as predictors of truancy reduction among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Punishment as reinforcement technique seems to popular for curbing undesired actions and behaviours of students in the school environment. Punishment is of two types, namely positive and negative punishment. Positive punishment is the act of exposing the truant to painful or aversive event or consequence like flogging as to make the person not to exhibit such undesirable behaviour in the future. In positive punishment, the occurrence of behaviour is followed by the presentation of an aversive stimulus and as a result the behaviour is less likely to occur in the future (Lawrent, 2012). Agbena (2016) observed that positive punishments do not achieve the end-a culture of teaching and learning in secondary schools because; it does not build a culture of human rights, tolerance and respect, does not stop bad behaviours such as truancy, it breaks teacher-student's relationships which results to students drop out. In support, Paul (2014) argued that using corporal punishment as means to eradicate truancy in community secondary schools is not effective since the magnitude of truancy keeps increasing as teachers continued using it, and that corporal punishments cause fears and low self-confidence for one to continue with schooling. Contrarily, Eremie and Ukoima (2020) revealed that positive punishment has great influence in reduction of truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State. Akporaro (2008) noted that there is no consensus of opinions about the effect of physical punishments on students while a school of thought views it as harmful and negative and another sees it as positive, and went further to argue that favouring the negative side that physical punishments intimidate students, and this result into developing low self-esteem, show rejection and hesitations to participate in learning activities.

On the other hand, negative punishment involves the withdrawal of certain privileges (Asonibare, 2016) which decreases the probability of a behaviour to occur by removing a pleasurable stimulus (Lawrent, 2012). This shows that the occurrence of behaviour is likely to be followed by the removal of a reinforcing stimulus which makes the behaviour less likely to occur in the future. Negative punishment is an alternative to positive punishment which does not result to physical pain or injury on a truant student, and may not push the student to become aggressive in future. Mantzy (2011) noted that most students feel more remorse when they are being placed on negative punishment than when they are flogged (positive punishment). She retreated that negative punishment is an effective technique for achieving greater percentage of truancy reduction among students in secondary schools. From the foregoing background, it can be observed that positive and negative punishments are special reinforcement techniques that could be adopted by the school counsellors and teachers for the reduction of truant behaviour in the school system. However, it seems that not much studies in recent times have shown the extent to which these special reinforcement techniques can predict truancy reduction among secondary students in Port Harcourt Metropolis, hence the conduct of this study becomes imperative.

Statement of the Problem

Truancy among students in public secondary schools in Rivers State as well as other states in Nigeria is a problem which seems to have persisted in our educational system over the years. Truancy is a deviant act

that would not only hinder the student from been abreast with the school events and educational development, but affects the student's ability to mature and progress in affective and cognitive areas that are associated with academic development in schools. In fact, 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 (Gideon, 2021). To reduce the incidence of truancy in schools in Rivers State of Nigeria, the government of Rivers State in its wisdom is currently implementing the policy of free education at all levels in the state as to ensure that all students attend school regularly and punctually. However, despite the implementation of this policy statement in the state, observations and experiences tend to show that not much improvement have been achieved as regards truancy reduction among secondary school students in Rivers State. It was on this basis that the researchers sought to ascertain the extent to which positive punishment and negative punishment techniques can predict truancy reduction among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to positive punishment and negative punishment techniques as predictors of truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Ascertain if positive punishment can predict truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.
2. Find out how negative punishment can predict truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of the study:

1. To what extent does positive punishment predict truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis?
2. To what extent does negative punishment predict truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant prediction of positive punishment to truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.
2. There is no significant prediction of negative punishment to truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

RESEARCH METHODS

Design of the Study

The study adopted the correlational research design. Correlational research design is most appropriate for this study because the researchers sought to analyse the extent to which positive punishment and negative punishment techniques (independent variables) predicts the dependent variable (truancy reduction among senior secondary school students) in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

Population of the study was 47,297 students (30,637 in Obio/Akpor, and 16,660 in Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas) in all the 37 public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis (Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board, 2021).

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sample of the study consisted of 397 senior secondary school two students (182 males and 215 females) in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. The reason for using choosing only SSS 2 students for the study was not far from the fact that the SSS 2 are presently carrying out some leadership functions at the students' level as assigned or authorized by the school management since the SSS 3 students are writing their Senior School Certificate Examinations. The Taro Yamane's sample size formula was used to arrive at the sample size of 397 SSS 2 students which was used for the

study. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample of the study, in which stratified sampling technique was used to stratify the schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis into Local Government Area strata (Obio/Akpor Local Government Area and Port Harcourt City Local Government Area). Thereafter, 14 schools were selected from Obio/Akpor, and 11 schools were selected from Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas. Stratified sampling technique was also used to select 257 students (110 males and 147 females) from the 14 selected schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, and 140 students (72 males and 68 females) from the 11 selected schools in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area. The reason for the differences observed in the numbers of schools and students selected in Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas is because the two Local Government Areas in Port Harcourt Metropolis do not have equal number of schools as well as students.

Research Instrument

Two instruments titled “Punishment Techniques for Truancy Reduction Questionnaire” (PTRQ) with 12 items and “Truancy among Students Questionnaire” (TSQ) with 10 items were used for data collection. The two questionnaire were prepared on a 4-point response scale ranging from Very High Extent (VHE) with 4 points to Very Low Extent (VLE) with 1 point.

Validation of the Instrument

The face and content validity of the two instruments (Punishment Techniques for Truancy Reduction Questionnaire and Truancy among Students Questionnaire) were determined by two experts in Guidance and Counselling and one other expert in Measurement and Evaluation all in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The experts properly reviewed and scrutinized the instruments in terms of the clarity, relevance, quality and appropriateness of the instruments, and their corrections and comments formed the basis for the amendments and the final print out of the instruments.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability coefficient of Punishment Techniques for Truancy Reduction Questionnaire was established through Cronbach Alpha Method which the reliability coefficient of 0.76 for positive punishment and 0.74 for negative punishment, while through test-retest method, 0.82 reliability coefficient obtained for Truancy among Students Questionnaire.

Methods of Data Analysis

Simple Regression Analysis was used to answer the the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the ANOVA component of the Simple Regression Analysis all with the aid of SPSS version 25.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *To what extent does positive punishment predict truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis?*

Table 1: Simple Regression Model Summary on the Extent Positive Punishment Predict Truancy Reduction among Public Senior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.165 ^a	.027	.025	3.30889

- a. Predictors: (Constant): Positive Punishment
- b. Dependent Variable: Truancy reduction

Results in Table 1 shows that $R = 0.165^a$ and Adjusted R Square = 0.025. The positive Adjusted R Square value (0.025) indicates that positive punishment predicts truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis to a low extent. However, it can be observed that the prediction of positive punishment to truancy reduction among public senior secondary school

students in Port Harcourt Metropolis accounted for 2.5% of the total variance observed in the prediction model, while 97.5% could be due to other factors and residuals that are not considered in the study. This result proved that positive punishment is a determinant factor that can reduce the incidence of truancy among students. Thus, the more students are given positive punishment for act of truancy, the better they drop acts of truancy.

Research Question 2: *To what extent does negative punishment predict truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis?*

Table 2: Simple Regression Model Summary on the Extent Negative Punishment Predict Truancy Reduction among Public Senior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.443 ^a	.197	.195	3.00706

a. Predictors: (Constant); Negative punishment

b. Dependent Variable: Truancy reduction

Table 2 presents the simple regression model summary of the extent negative punishment predict truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Results in Table 2 shows that $R = 0.443^a$ and Adjusted R Square = 0.195 indicating that negative punishment predicts truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis positively ($R-Adj^2 = 0.195^a$). The $R-Adj^2$ value (0.195) indicates that negative punishment accounts for 19.5% of the total variance observed in the prediction of truancy reduction in junior secondary schools in Rivers State, while the remaining 80.5% was due to other factors and residuals that are not considered in the study.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant prediction of positive punishment to truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Table 3: Regression ANOVA on the Prediction of Positive Punishment to Truancy Reduction among Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	120.270	1	120.270	10.985	.001 ^b
	Residual	4291.730	392	10.984		
	Total	4412.000	393			

a. Dependent Variable: Truancy reduction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Positive punishment

Table 3 reveals that $F\text{-value} = 10.985$, $P\text{-value} = .001^b$ and degrees of freedom (df) = 1 and 392. Since $F_{(1, 392)} = 10.985$ and $P\text{-value} (0.001) < 0.05$, the null hypothesis that “There is no significant prediction of positive punishment to truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis” was therefore rejected. Hence, it was concluded that positive punishment significantly predicts truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant prediction of negative punishment to truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Table 4: Regression ANOVA of Prediction of Negative Punishment to Truancy Reduction among students in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	867.375	1	867.375	95.923	.000 ^b
	Residual	3544.625	392	9.042		
	Total	4412.000	393			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Negative Punishment,

b. Dependent Variable: Truancy Reduction

Table 4 presents the Regression ANOVA on significant prediction of negative reinforcement to truancy reduction among students in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Results in Table 4.16 reveals that F-value = 95.923, P-value = .000^b and degrees of freedom (df) = 1 and 392. Since $F_{(1, 392)} = 95.923$ and P-value (0.000) < 0.05, the null hypothesis that “There is no significant prediction of negative punishment to truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis” was therefore rejected. Hence, it was concluded that negative reinforcement significantly predicts truancy reduction among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Positive Punishment and Truancy Reduction among Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Results for research question one and hypothesis one showed that positive punishment significantly predicts truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The observed positive relationship between positive punishment and truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis showed that positive punishment is a significant determinant of truancy reduction among students. This result proved that positive punishment is a strong factor that can reduce the incidence of truancy among students. Thus, the more students are given positive punishment for truancy, the better they drop the acts of truancy. This result is in disagreement with Eremie and Ukoima (2020) who previously found positive punishment to have great influence in reduction of truancy among secondary school students in Rivers State. In disagreement with the finding of this study, Paul (2014) in his study on the effectiveness of corporal punishment on eradicating truancy in secondary schools in Magu District revealed that using corporal punishment as means to eradicate truancy in community secondary schools is not effective since the magnitude of truancy keeps increasing as teachers continued using it, and that corporal punishments cause fears and low self-confidence for one to continue with schooling. However, Akporaro (2008) argued that there is no consensus of opinions about the effect of physical punishments on students while a school of thought views it as harmful and negative and another sees it as positive.

Negative Punishment and Truancy Reduction among Public Senior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Findings from research question two and hypothesis two revealed that negative punishment significantly predicts truancy reduction among public senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis. This result proved that negative punishment is not a strong factor that can reduce the incidence of truancy among students. Thus, negative punishment does not contribute strongly to the reduction of incidence of truancy among students. This finding is because negative punishment involves the withdrawal of certain privileges (Asonibare, 2016). In addition, Mantzy (2011) who conducted a research on the perceived effect of punishment on truancy reduction among students in Embu County, Kenya revealed that most students feel more remorse when they are being placed on negative punishment than when they are flogged (positive punishment). She concluded that negative punishment is an effective technique for achieving greater percentage of truancy reduction among students in secondary schools. However,

Busienei (2012) expressed great concerns about the alternatives to positive or corporal punishments; hence she submitted that teachers should impose non-physical disciplinary measures as an alternative to beatings, and that teachers should require their students to write statements describing their negative effects of their behaviour or apologize for the mistakes in front of their classmates and that instructor should require misbehaving students to sit on the chair at the back of the class as to think of their mistake and ways to improve the situation.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the study, it can be observed that positive punishment and negative punishment significantly predict truancy reduction among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria. It was therefore, concluded that positive punishment and negative punishment are strong reinforcement techniques that can significantly reduce the incidence of truancy among senior secondary school students.

Implications for Counselling

Based on the findings of the study and conclusion drawn, the following implications for counselling were made:

1. The study exposes the need for application of such reinforcement techniques as positive and negative punishments for truancy reduction as the situation demands.
2. The findings of the study could call for the designing of policy framework or guiding principles for the application of positive and negative punishments in truancy reduction among secondary school students.
3. This study could be a wake-up call for the revitalization of guidance and counselling units in public schools where students found in such deviant behaviour as truancy can be referred to for proper counselling and reinforcement towards desirable change in behaviour.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. The use of positive punishment for truancy reduction should be with serious caution even though it predicts truancy reduction since it is capable of inflicting injury on the truants.
2. Negative punishment should be used as alternative to corporal punishment for reduction of truancy among students for better results.

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