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# THE AETIOLOGICAL FACTORS OF NON-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY STUDENTS IN OYO STATE: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING.

By

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## ABSTRACT

*This study compared the significant differences that existed in the causes of non-school attendance behaviour. Five hundred and forty chronic absentees purposively selected from ninety secondary schools in Oyo State participated in the study. Predictor of Non- school Attendance Behaviour Questionnaire was employed for data collection while t-test statistics was utilised for data analysis. The findings showed that there were no significant differences in the non-school attendance behaviour of: male and female subjects ( $t = .67$ ;  $df = 538$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ); Christian and Muslim subjects ( $t = 1.00$ ;  $df = 538$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ); junior and senior secondary school subjects ( $t = 1.12$ ,  $df = 538$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) while there was significant difference in the non-school attendance behaviour of students from educated and illiterate parents ( $t = 4.06$ ;  $df = 538$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). The implication of the findings on counselling profession was discussed.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are established for the purposes of meeting the manpower needs of a nation as well as inculcating the right type of values into learners. For these laudable aims to be attained teachers are employed and paid to teach students in schools. The employment of teachers alone could not bring about the realization of these objectives. The attainment of the objectives is directly pinned down to availability of students whom the teachers are expected to teach. It therefore implies that when teachers are there and students are absent the goals of establishing institutions of learning would be defeated. Similarly, the same result would be obtained when the attendance of students is grossly inadequate. The inability of students to attend school when teachers are available to teach is described as non-school attendance behaviour. Non- school attendance behaviour is an umbrella term used to describe all absences from institutions of learning. (Ioannakis, 1997). Consequently, it embraces absence in the school with and without permission or explanation.

The controversy surrounding an attempt to make a clear distinction

between absentism and truancy may be used to explain the interchange of non-school attendance with absenteeism and truancy or the adoption of non-school attendance behaviour in lieu of absenteeism and truancy by scholars like Lansdown (1990); Munn and Johnstone (1992); Ioannakis (1997) and Rothman (2001).

Non-school attendance has two major forms. This typology is generated from the period or time of student's absence in the school in a day. These are blanket and post-registration non-school attendance. While the former occurs when the absence takes the whole day, the latter is manifested when a student is marked to be present in the school in the morning only to leave before the closing hour or marked to be absent in the morning only to be present in the afternoon or marked to be present in the school only to be absent in some lessons.

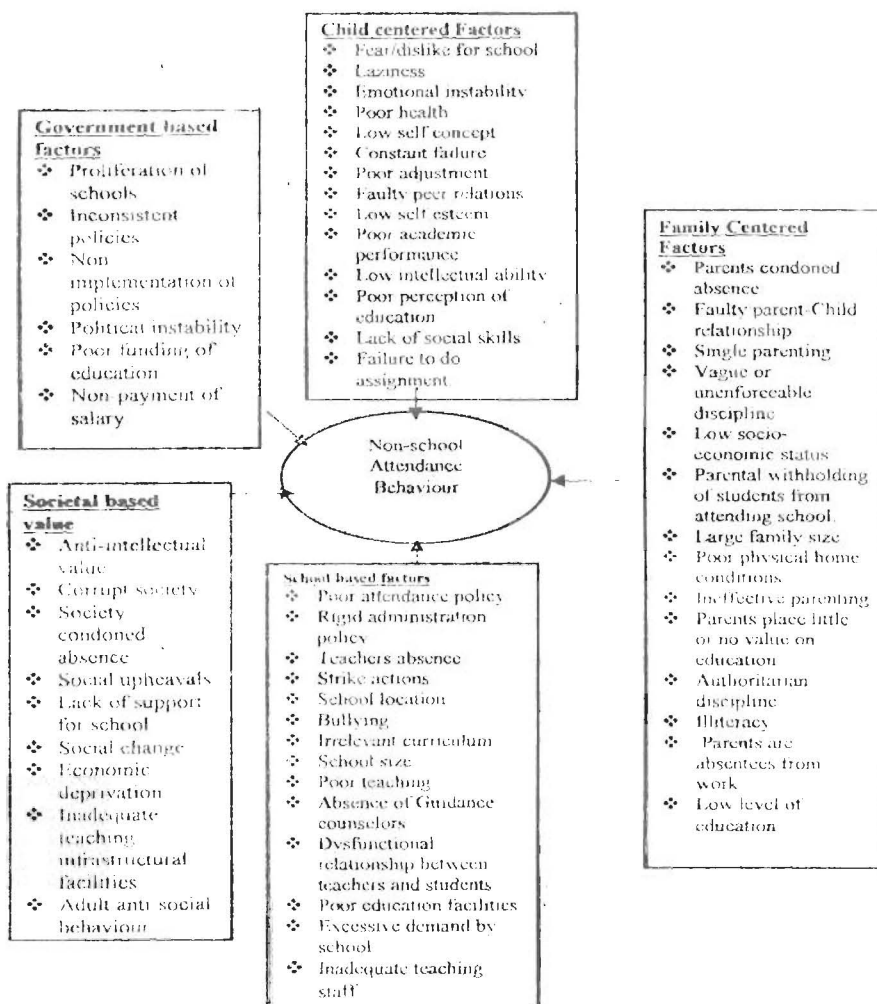
The high prevalence of non-school attendance behaviour of students in all levels of schools across the globe has reached a worrisome stage. A recent Western Australia Child Health Survey of schools by Zubrick, *et al* (1997) in Oerleman and Jenkins (1998) discovered that 3 per cent of students were absent for at least one day per week, or 20 percent of their schooling. Eleven percent missed at least half a day per week. Of the total number of absences over 14 per cent were unexplained, that is without a medical certificate or note. In a cross sectional survey conducted to estimate the magnitude of school absenteeism and determine its causes in a village in Tamilnadu, South India by Ananthakrishnan and Nalini (2002), a total of 278 children (117 girls and 161 boys) were found to be absent during the survey. Although accurate reports on the number of students who skipped school on a typical day in Nigeria is presently unavailable it is common phenomenon to see some Nigerian students roaming the streets, playing snooker or table tennis, hawking, watching films during school hours.

The origin of non-school attendance behaviour has been traced to the inception of schooling (Coleman, 1986). Although there are no records to support the rate at which students absent themselves from school at the inception of schooling, this assertion is quite correct when one considers the fact that non-attendance in school may be as a result of justified and unjustified reasons.

If the existence of non-school attendance is traceable to the inception of schooling and the alarming rate at which the number of students who skipped school continues to increase till today it implies that certain factors are causing/ sustaining its existence. In their attempts to segregate these actiological factors, scholars have argued in favour of three factor causative theory (Ioannakis, 1997; Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams and Dalicandro



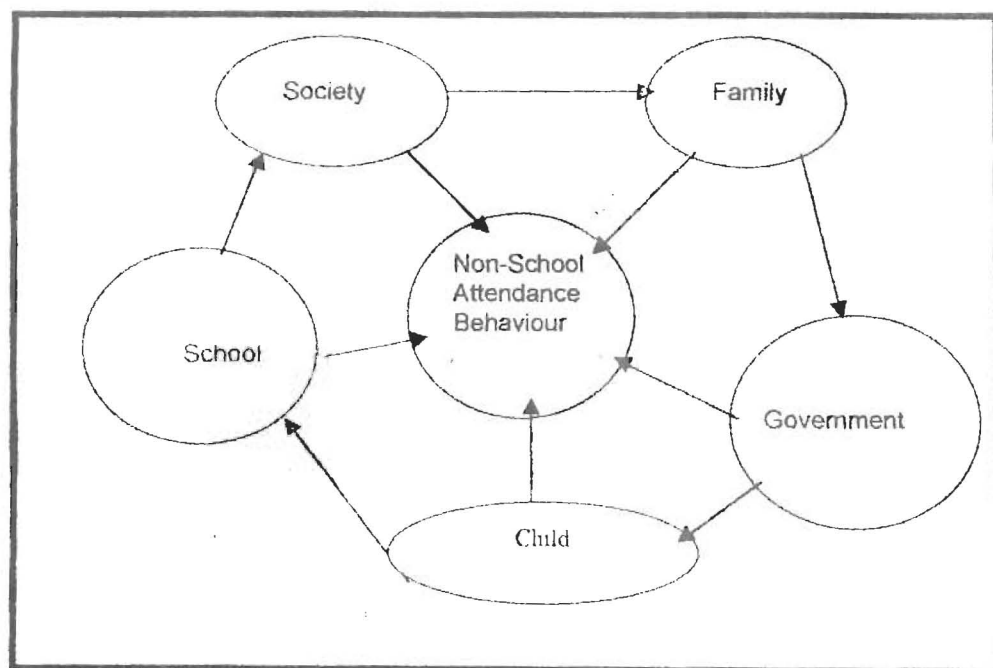
1998), four factor causative theory (Project Stay-In, 1991; Rohrman, 1993, and Kinder, Harland, Wilkin and Wakefield, 1995), and five factor causative theory (Gesinde, 2004, 2005). The five factor theory of Gesinde (2004) reveals that the aetiology of non-school attendance behaviour of students could be traced to factors resident in the child, family, school, society, and government. He equally utilizes the below conceptual models to depict the multi-aetiological correlates of non-school attendance behaviour as well as the interaction among the factors.



**Fig 1: Multi-Aetiological Correlates of Non-School Attendance Behaviour Conceptual Model.**

From the multi-aetiological correlates of non-school attendance behaviour conceptual model above the interaction between the five causal factors and non-school attendance behaviour could be diagrammatically represented

thus:



**Fig. II: Predictors of Non-school Attendance Interaction Conceptual Model.**

From the foregoing, quite a number of studies have been carried out on causative factors of non-school attendance behaviour. When Gesinde (2005) further investigated the combined and separate contributions of child, family, school, society, and government to the occurrence of truant behaviour among secondary school students in Oyo State he discovered that all the independent variables taken together correlated significantly with the dependent variable. ( $R = .812$ ;  $F(5,534) = 207$ ;  $P < .05$ ). The results also revealed that the five independent variables jointly accounted for 66.0% of the observed variance in non-school attendance behaviour ( $R^2 = 0.6597$ ). The results also indicated that each of the five independent variables contributed to the prediction of the dependent variable. Government variable made the highest contribution to the prediction of non-school attendance behaviour ( $B = .280$ ,  $t = 8.717$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ); followed by school ( $B = .243$ ,  $t = 7.569$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ); child ( $B = .248$ ,  $t = 7.494$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ); society ( $B = .180$ ,  $t = 5.324$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ); and family ( $B = .137$ ,  $t = 4.730$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) in that order of potency level. The question that seeks for answer from this discovery is that - if both theoretical and empirical studies have established the above as the five sustaining/causative factors of non-school

attendance behaviour are there significant differences in the perception of students on the bases of gender, religion, class and parental education? While evidence from the review of the literature revealed past attempts to provide answer to some of these demographical variables no attempt was made on others. It is also evident from the review that findings were inconclusive on certain variables.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In the light of the above, this study aimed at determining the extent to which students differ on the bases of gender, religion, class and parental education, in their perception of five causative factors of non- school attendance behaviour.

### **Research Hypotheses**

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

1. Male and female students will not significantly differ in their perception of aetiological factors of non- school attendance behaviour.
2. Christian and Muslim students will not significantly differ in their perception of aetiological factors of non- school attendance behaviour.
3. Junior and senior secondary school students will not significantly differ in their perception of aetiological factors of non- school attendance behaviour.
4. Students from educated and illiterate parents will not significantly differ in their perception of aetiological factors of non- school attendance behaviour.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Design**

The study adopted descriptive survey design. This is because it helps in the process of comparisons, evaluation of existing condition and collection of factual information (Hassan, 1995).

### **Sample**

In this study, purposive sampling technique was used to select 540 chronic absentees from the sampled 90 secondary schools in the three senatorial districts of Oyo State. Out of this number, 248 were males representing 45.93% while the remaining 292 representing 54.07% were females. Their ages ranged from twelve (12) to twenty-one (21) with a mean age of 15.99 and standard deviation of 2.12. The subjects consist of students from both the junior and senior secondary schools as well as from



public and privately owned secondary schools.

### **Instrumentation**

A self-developed structured questionnaire- *Predictors of Non-School Attendance Questionnaire* was used to obtain data on the predictive ability of the five aetiological factors resident in the child, family, school, society and government. This survey questionnaire has two main sub-divisions. The first sub-division required the subjects of the study to supply a number of socio-demographic information while the second sub-division consists of fifteen positively worded items on each of the aetiological predictors of non-school attendance resident in the child, family, school, society and government. Each of the aetiological predictors of non-school attendance behaviour utilizes a five point Likert rating scale with response ranging from very much like me (5) which is the highest score to very much unlike me (1), which is the lowest score. For each of the aetiological predictors of non-school attendance behaviour of students, the highest possible score a respondent could get was 75 ( $5 \times 15$ ) while the lowest score, was 15 ( $1 \times 15$ ). For the five aetiological predictors the highest possible score of a respondent could get was 375 ( $75 \times 5$ ), while the lowest score was 75 ( $15 \times 5$ ). For the purpose of this research, the higher the score the higher the predictive ability of the aetiological factors and vice versa.

The reliability index of the questionnaires was through the use of split-half test reliability coefficient of relationship. After scoring the split-half test reliability coefficient of relationship that was based on odd and even paradigm yielded a split-half reliability of 0.78.

### **Procedure**

The administration of the instrument took place in the respective schools of the participants. It took about 50 minutes to complete the predictors of Non-school Attendance Behaviour Questionnaire. The scale and the questionnaire were collected on the day of administration with the help of 30 research assistants specially trained for the purpose of this study.

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained were subjected to t-test statistical analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

### Hypothesis One

**Table I: t-test comparison of non school attendance behaviour of male and female students.**

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-obs	P
Male	247	125.76	30.97	538	.67	1.96	NS
Female	293	123.99	30.66				

\*  $P < .05$  level of significance

Going by the results in the table I the mean score of male was 125.76 while that of female was put at 123.99. Their standard deviations on the other hand were 30.97 and 30.66 respectively. The comparison of the t-calculated (.67) and t-observed (1.96) at 0.05 alpha level, however, revealed that the t-calculated is lesser than the t-observed. Hence, the hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference in the non-school attendance behaviour of male and female is accepted.

### Hypothesis Two

**Table II: t-test comparison of non-school attendance behaviour of Christian and Muslim students.**

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-obs	P
Christian	322	125.89	31.99	538	1.00	1.96	NS
Muslim	218	123.18	28.91				

\*  $P < .05$  level.

Information gathered from the table II showed that the mean score of Christian was 125.89 while that of Muslim was 123.18. Their standard deviations on the other hand were 31.99 and 28.91 respectively. The table further revealed that the t-observed (1.96) is greater than the t-calculated (1.00) at .05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis, which submits that there is no significant difference in the non-school attendance behaviour of Christian and Muslim students is accepted.



**Hypothesis Three****Table III: t-test comparison of non-school attendance behaviour of junior and secondary school.**

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal.	t-obs	P
Junior	151	122.42	30.38	538	-1.12	-1.96	NS
Senior	389	125.72	30.94				

\*P&lt;.05 level

In table III the junior secondary subjects obtained a mean score of 122.42 while subjects from the senior secondary school got a mean score of 125.72. In addition to this, the standard deviation of junior students was put at 30.38 while that of the senior students was 30.94. The table also indicated that the t-calculated (-1.12) is lesser than the t-observed (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference in the non-school attendance behaviour of junior and senior secondary school students is accepted.

**Hypothesis Four****Table IV: t-test comparison of non-school attendance behaviour of students from educated and illiterate parents.**

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-obs	P
Literate	402	121.69	30.44	538	4.06	1.96	NS
Illiterate	138	133.86	30.09				

\*P&lt;.05 level.

The results presented in the above table IV indicated that the mean scores of students from educated and illiterate parents were 121.69 and 133.86 respectively. The standard deviation obtained for students from educated parents was 30.44 while that of students from illiterate parents was 30.09. The table further revealed that a t-calculated of 4.06 and t-observed of 1.96 were obtained for the two variables at .05 alpha level. A comparison of the t-values showed that the t-calculated is greater than the t-observed. As a result of this, the null hypothesis, which states that there is

no significant difference in the non-school attendance behaviour of students from educated and illiterate parents is rejected.

### Discussion

When the first hypothesis was subjected to statistical analysis the difference that existed in the mean scores of male and female students ( $x = 1.77$ ) was found to be statistically insignificant. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. This finding agrees with Geo-Opah (1992); Stoll, (1993); Garry, (2001); Ananthakrishnan and Nalini (2002) who reported no significant difference in the non-school attendance behaviour of male and female students. On the other hand, it contradicted Owodunni's (1996) finding which recorded significant difference in the non-school attendance of male and female students. The outcome of this hypothesis did not provoke any surprise, because non-school attendance behaviour cut-across gender boundaries. The way and manner by which male and female students interact in schools nowadays give room for modelling desirable and undesirable behaviours. When this happens, similarity in beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours cannot be ruled out.

The second null hypothesis was found to be correct since the mean score difference of 2.70 that existed between Christian and Muslim students was not statistically significant at 0.05 level. The similarity in the non-school attendance behaviour of Christian and Muslim students could probably be accounted for by the mere fact that the instrument used to collect data did not inject religion sentiment in the items. As a result, adherents of the two religions remained unsentimental. In addition to this, the rate at which the Muslims have embraced the western education, which found its way into Nigeria through the Christian missionaries, could also be held responsible for the absence of significant difference in non-school attendance behaviour.

The result of statistical analysis confirmed the third null hypothesis. Although the mean score of senior secondary students was higher than that of junior secondary students the mean difference of 3.30 was found to be insignificant statistically. This finding, therefore, corroborates Japanese Ministry of Education (1987); Munn and Johnstone, (1992); Stoll, (1993) earlier findings that established non-school attendance behaviour in both junior and senior secondary students. The result of the hypothesis is expected to be so, since non-school attendance behaviour cut- across class and age barriers. Besides, the fact that senior and junior students skipped schools, similarities could also be noticed in reasons for their absence. It is even common to see junior students imitating the desirable and undesirable behaviours exhibited by the senior ones.

The prediction of the fourth null hypothesis, was, however, found to be untrue because the mean difference of 12.17 was found to be statistically significant at .05 level of significance. The outcome of this hypothesis led credence to Alhassan (1990); Geo-Opah (1992) findings that parental illiteracy was found to be significantly associated with truancy. Besides, there are certain dissimilarities in the home of students from educated and illiterate parents. Unlike most of the students from the educated parents, most of the contributory factors of truancy stemming from the family, according to Project Stay - In (1991), are features in the home of students from illiterate parents.

### **Implications for Counselling Profession**

The fact that no significant difference existed statistically in the non-school attendance behaviour on the bases of gender, religion and class of students implies that counsellors should not see female students as being too "weak" to the extent of engaging in non-school attendance behaviour. Second, religion sentiments should be properly handled, when students are to be counselled on non-school attendance behaviour. Similarly, students should not be regarded as either too young or old to engage in persistent act of skipping schools.

The significant difference that existed in the non-school attendance behaviour of students from educated and illiterate parents indicates that educational status of parents has a significant impact on students' non-school attendance. Counsellors are expected to consider and evaluate the contributory role of parental educational status to illegal absence of students in the school.

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