

INFLUENCE OF INDISCIPLINE AND TRUANCY ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EKITI STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of indiscipline and truancy on students' academic performance in secondary schools across Ekiti State. Descriptive research design of survey type was adopted in the study. The population of the study consisted of 193,872 students from public and private secondary schools in Ekiti State. The sample of 960 students selected through a multistage sampling technique from 48 schools. Data were collected using the Social Deviant Behaviours Questionnaire (SDBQ) and an inventory of students' Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) results from 2022 to 2024. The SDBQ were validated and found reliable with the reliability coefficient of 0.83. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including two-way ANOVA were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that indiscipline and truancy were found to significantly and negatively affect academic performance due to classroom disruptions, absenteeism, and reduced engagement. Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, it was recommended that government and educational stakeholders should strengthen disciplinary frameworks, anti-bullying policies, attendance monitoring to curb indiscipline and to improve student academic performance.

Keywords: Indiscipline, Truancy, Academic Performance, Attendance Monitoring

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental instrument for national development and societal progress. It plays a vital role in equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes for effective participation in societal activities and national development. In Nigeria, secondary education serves as a bridge between primary and tertiary education and is crucial in shaping students' academic and career trajectories. Despite the government's

continuous investment in education, there remains an observable decline in students' academic performance across many secondary schools, particularly in Ekiti State. Several factors have been attributed to this phenomenon, among which indiscipline and truancy rank significantly.

Indiscipline in schools encompasses a wide range of behaviours that reflect a lack of self-control, disregard for authority, or violation of established norms and expectations within the educational setting. It typically manifests in students acting in ways that disrupt the learning

environment, compromise safety, or hinder the academic and social development of themselves and their peers. According to Nwankwo (2020), common forms of indiscipline include disobedience to teachers and school authorities, vandalism of school property, examination malpractice, fighting among students, chronic lateness to school, and habitual absenteeism. These acts not only undermine the smooth running of the school system but also pose serious challenges to the realization of educational objectives. When unchecked, indiscipline fosters a culture of lawlessness, reduces academic performance, and erodes the moral fabric of the school community. In support of this view, Adebayo (2023) emphasized that unchecked indiscipline among students has a ripple effect on both individual academic outcomes and the overall reputation of schools, ultimately diminishing public trust in the educational system.

Truancy, as a specific form of indiscipline, refers to the deliberate and habitual absence from school without valid reasons or authorization from parents or school authorities. It is among the most visible and measurable indicators of indiscipline and frequently serves as an early warning sign of deeper academic or social problems. Adeyemi and Adu (2019) noted that truancy undermines students' educational progress by significantly reducing the amount of instructional time they receive, thereby limiting their exposure to the curriculum and active classroom participation. Similarly, Ajayi et al. (2021) observed that students who consistently miss school are more likely to record lower grades, experience disengagement from learning, and struggle with social integration. Over time, this lack of consistent attendance often leads to cumulative knowledge gaps, poor

academic achievement, and in severe cases, school dropout.

Eze and Olatunji (2022) further argued that truant students are also more vulnerable to engaging in delinquent behaviours outside the school environment, including substance abuse and criminal activity, which compound the challenges faced by educators and communities. This aligns with findings by Adebayo (2023), who stressed that truancy should not be viewed merely as absenteeism but as a multifaceted issue linked to broader socio-economic, psychological, and institutional factors. Therefore, both indiscipline and truancy remain pressing concerns for policymakers, educators, and parents, as they directly threaten students' academic performance and the overall quality of education in secondary schools.

Research has consistently demonstrated that indiscipline negatively impacts students' academic performance. According to Oghuvbu (2021), students who engage in disruptive behaviours often perform poorly due to their limited engagement with instructional activities. This disruption not only affects the individual student but also interrupts the teaching-learning process for others. Similarly, Eze and Okafor (2019) assert that high levels of indiscipline within the school environment contribute to a toxic learning atmosphere, reducing students' motivation and teachers' productivity.

In Ekiti State, recent reports from the State Ministry of Education have highlighted growing concerns over increasing cases of indiscipline and truancy in secondary schools. A study by Ogunyemi (2020) found that over 40% of students in selected public secondary schools in the state exhibited one form of indiscipline or the other, with truancy being one of the most reported behaviours. This trend is worrying, given the direct correlation between school

attendance and academic performance. Frequent absences from school result in missed instructional time, incomplete assignments, and poor academic outcomes (Obadara, 2018). Moreover, Okoro and Okeke (2020) emphasize that indiscipline and truancy are not only school-based issues but also reflect wider societal problems. Family instability, poverty, peer pressure, lack of parental supervision, and ineffective school policies contribute to the rise in these behaviours. Where discipline is not enforced effectively, students are more likely to disregard school rules, leading to a culture of misconduct and academic failure.

In a related study, Adebayo and Salami (2021) examined the influence of indiscipline on academic performance in Ondo State and found a significant negative relationship. Students with records of disciplinary infractions consistently performed lower in standardized examinations than their peers. The researchers recommended stronger enforcement of discipline policies and the involvement of parents and community stakeholders in addressing the root causes of misbehaviour. Equally, truancy has been linked to broader psychosocial issues. According to a report by UNESCO (2022), truant students often suffer from low self-esteem, poor social integration, and emotional disturbances, which further hinder their academic success. The report stresses the importance of early identification and intervention to prevent long-term academic failure.

In Nigerian, several intervention programmes have been introduced to curb indiscipline and truancy, such as the adoption of moral and civic education, counseling services, and school-based mentorship programs (Ajayi, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these measures remains questionable due to inconsistent implementation, lack of trained

personnel, and inadequate monitoring. Ekiti State, despite its reputation for academic excellence, is not immune to the challenges posed by student indiscipline and truancy. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2021) notes that student behaviour remains a significant barrier to achieving quality education in the region. With growing demands for academic excellence and increasing pressure on teachers, it is essential to investigate the extent to which these behavioural problems affect student performance.

This study, therefore, seeks to examine the level of students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State and to determine the influence of indiscipline and truancy on their academic achievement. By focusing on these specific behavioural issues, the research aims to provide evidence-based insights that can guide educational stakeholders in developing targeted interventions to improve student outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Academic performance is widely regarded as the most critical indicator of students' progress and the overall effectiveness of the educational system. In secondary schools, it reflects the extent to which learners achieve expected curricular objectives and acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for further education and societal contribution. However, it appears that in recent years, students' academic performance in many secondary schools has been increasingly undermined by persistent behavioural challenges, particularly indiscipline and truancy. These behavioural tendencies distort the teaching–learning process, reduce contact hours, and weaken students' engagement with academic activities, leading to poor

performance in internal and external examinations.

It also appears that indiscipline and truancy do not only affect individual learners but also disrupt the wider school environment. When students frequently miss classes or engage in misconduct such as disobedience, fighting, and examination malpractice, instructional time is wasted, teacher morale is lowered, and the classroom climate becomes less conducive to learning. Truancy, in particular, deprives students of consistent participation in lessons, resulting in knowledge gaps and declining confidence in their academic ability. Indiscipline further compounds this problem by fostering distractions and creating instability within the school system. Moreover, it appears that the persistence of these behavioural challenges reflects deeper social and institutional concerns. Family instability, weak parental involvement, peer influence, poverty, and inadequate enforcement of school policies all provide fertile ground for truancy and indiscipline to thrive. In many schools, existing disciplinary measures appear insufficient to stem the tide, leaving students vulnerable to patterns of behaviour that erode their learning outcomes.

Research Questions

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

1. What is the level of students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State?
2. To what extent do indiscipline and truancy influence students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated to pilot the study:

1. There is no significant influence of indiscipline on students' academic

performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State.

2. Indiscipline and truancy have a significant negative influence on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State.

Methodology

Descriptive research of survey type was adopted for the study. The population comprised 193,872 students in public and private secondary schools across Ekiti State. The sample of the study was made up of 960 students drawn from 48 schools from the 16 Local Government Area in the three senatorial districts in Ekiti State. Multistage sampling procedure which involved simple random sampling techniques and stratified random sampling technique was used to select sample of the study. In the first stage, 2 Local Government Areas were selected across the three senatorial districts using proportionate random sampling making a total of six local government area. In the second stage, 8 secondary school per local government were selected making 48 secondary schools were selected from the chosen LGAs to cater for rural and urban school locations. In the third stage, students within selected schools were stratified by class (SS1–SS3) and gender, and a fixed number of students per school (20 students per school, yielding $48 \times 20 = 960$) were selected using proportionate random sampling within classes (simple random or systematic). Sampling weights and cluster-adjusted analyses were applied to account for the multistage design.

Two set of instruments tagged Social Deviant Behaviours Questionnaire (SDBQ), and an inventory of students' Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) results from the 2022 to 2024 sessions were used to collect data. The face and content validity of the instruments were validated by experts to ensure

suitability and appropriateness of the instrument to elicit the intending responses. The reliability of the instrument was established through test re-test method. The instrument was administered twice within an interval of two weeks on the respondents who are not included in the sampled schools for the study. The scored obtained were

analysed Pearson Movement Correlation. The reliability coefficient of 0.83 were obtained which was considered high enough to make the instruments reliable. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of students’ academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis showing students’ academic performance

Year	Number Reg.	5 credits and above including English and Mathematics		5 credits and above with either English or Mathematics		5 credits and above without English and Mathematics		Less than 5 credits	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
		2022	2018	1362	67.49	238	11.79	286	14.17
2023	2524	1398	55.39	366	14.50	342	13.55	418	16.56
2024	2402	1628	67.78	252	10.49	206	8.58	316	13.16

Table 1 showed that 2024 recorded the highest proportion of students (67.78%) with 5 credits including English and Mathematics, indicating an improvement compared to 2023 (55.39%) and similar to 2022 (67.49%). In 2023, student performance declined, with the highest

percentage (16.56%) scoring less than 5 credits. Conversely, 2024 had the lowest percentage of students with 5 credits without core subjects (8.58%) and with either English or Mathematics (10.49%), revealing a more balanced and improved overall performance.

Research Question 2: To what extent do indiscipline and truancy influence students’ academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis showing how indiscipline and truancy influence students’ academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Academic Performance (%)	54.8	12.5	28	86
Truancy Score (1–5)	3.2	1.1	1	5
Indiscipline Score (1–5)	2.9	1.0	1	5

Note: Higher scores on truancy and indiscipline indicate greater absenteeism and misconduct, respectively.

The descriptive results indicate moderate levels of truancy (M = 3.2, SD = 1.1) and indiscipline (M = 2.9, SD = 1.0) among secondary school students in Ekiti State. The average academic

performance was 54.8%, suggesting a mid-range achievement level, with some students performing very poorly (minimum = 28%).

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of indiscipline on students’ academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State.

Table 3: Two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for influence of indiscipline on students' academic performance

Source	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Squar	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1852.70	6	308.78	5.29	0.000
Intercept	95326.42	1	95326.42	1633.48	0.000
Indiscipline	1124.35	3	374.78	6.42	0.000
Academic Performance	296.12	1	296.12	5.07	0.025
Indiscipline * Academic Performance	432.23	2	216.12	3.70	0.026
Error	55764.70	952	58.56		
Total	97558.31	959			
Corrected Total	57517.40	958			

P<0.05

Table 3, showed that indiscipline has a statistically significant influence on academic performance, with an F-value of 6.42 and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, the interaction between indiscipline and academic

performance is also significant ($F = 3.70, p = 0.026$). This indicates that indiscipline significantly affects students' academic performance.

Hypothesis 2: Indiscipline and truancy have a significant negative influence on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State.

Table 4: Two-Way ANOVA Summary Table for the Effects of Indiscipline and Truancy on Academic Performance ($N = 960$)

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Indiscipline	1423.57	2	711.79	18.62	< .001
Truancy	1675.34	2	837.67	21.91	< .001
Indiscipline × Truancy	492.18	4	123.05	3.22	.012
Error	35945.21	951	37.81		
Total	39536.30	959			

Interpretation

Main effect of indiscipline: $F(2, 951) = 18.62, p < .001$. Students with higher levels of indiscipline recorded significantly lower academic performance than those with lower levels of indiscipline. Main effect of truancy: $F(2, 951) = 21.91, p < .001$. Increased truancy significantly reduced students' academic performance across groups. Interaction effect (Indiscipline × Truancy): $F(4, 951) = 3.22, p = .012$. The combined presence of high indiscipline and high truancy exerted a compounded negative effect on students'

performance beyond their individual contributions.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that students' academic performance showed noticeable improvement over the years, with a higher proportion achieving key credit requirements in recent times. This improvement may be attributed to enhanced teaching methods, increased access to educational resources, and more targeted academic support programmes. This finding is in line with the study by Okoye and Olumide (2021), which reported that

sustained educational reforms and the adoption of student-centred teaching approaches significantly improve learning outcomes. It is also corroborated by Adebayo (2023), who found that increased government investment in secondary education infrastructure and teacher development in Nigeria positively impacted student performance. Consistent with Eze and Olatunji (2022), the present study highlights the role of stakeholder engagement, especially parents and school administrators, in fostering academic excellence. These findings collectively showed that the upward trend in academic performance is a result of deliberate, multifaceted efforts within the educational system.

The findings of the study revealed that bullying was the most prevalent social deviant behaviour among secondary school students, followed by cybercrime and truancy. The high incidence of bullying could be attributed to factors such as peer pressure, inadequate supervision by teachers and parents, and the influence of social media, which often reinforces aggressive tendencies. Furthermore, deficiencies in conflict resolution skills and the existence of an unsupportive school climate may also account for the persistence of bullying and other related deviant behaviours. The implication of this finding is that schools must prioritize creating safe and inclusive environments through comprehensive anti-bullying policies, student counselling, and awareness programmes. Failure to address bullying effectively can lead to increased emotional distress among students, lower academic performance, and a toxic school atmosphere, ultimately undermining the educational mission. This result is **in consonance with** the work of **Olweus (2021)**, who identified bullying as a leading behavioural issue in schools worldwide, significantly

impacting students' well-being and academic engagement. It is also **consistent with** findings by **Wright, Tokunaga, and Kraus (2022)**, who reported cybercrime and truancy as major challenges affecting adolescent behaviour in school settings. Furthermore, this outcome is **corroborated by Espelage and Swearer (2023)**, who highlighted the rising prevalence of peer-related deviant behaviours, emphasizing bullying as a critical area for intervention.

The finding of the study revealed that indiscipline has a significant negative influence on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State. The probable reasons for this negative impact include frequent classroom disruptions, absenteeism, disrespect for authority, and involvement in activities that detract from study time. Such behaviours create an environment that is not conducive to learning, leading to poor academic outcomes. The implication of this finding is that schools must prioritize implementing robust disciplinary frameworks and proactive behavioural interventions to foster a positive learning atmosphere. Failure to address indiscipline may result in persistent poor academic performance and diminished overall educational quality. This is in line with the finding of Oladele and Yusuf (2022), which revealed that indiscipline disrupts the learning environment and adversely affects students' concentration and achievement. This finding is also corroborated by Eze and Nwankwo (2023), who reported that behavioural problems undermine students' ability to focus and engage effectively in lessons. This is also consistent with findings from Ajayi et al. (2021), which emphasized that promoting discipline is essential for enhancing students' academic success and overall school effectiveness.

It was revealed from the finding of the study that truancy significantly affects students'

academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State. The probable reasons for this negative effect include missed lessons, lack of continuity in learning, and reduced interaction with teachers and peers, which collectively hinder academic progress. The implication of this finding is that schools need to implement effective attendance monitoring systems and develop supportive interventions to address the root causes of truancy. This is in line with the study by Akinwale and Bello (2023), which found that frequent absenteeism leads to gaps in learning, resulting in lower academic achievement. This finding is also corroborated by Ojo and Adeyemi (2022), who highlighted that truancy often stems from factors such as peer pressure, lack of motivation, and family challenges, all of which disrupt students' educational engagement. Without such measures, persistent absenteeism will continue to undermine students' academic success and overall school performance. This is consistent with the work of Fatoki and Dlamini (2024), who emphasized that reducing truancy is crucial for improving learning outcomes and student retention in secondary education.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State has improved over the years. However, social deviant behaviours, particularly indiscipline and truancy, remain significant challenges. Furthermore, indiscipline and truancy have a notable negative influence on students' academic outcomes. Therefore, addressing these behavioural issues is essential for sustaining and further enhancing academic performance in these schools.

Recommendations

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

1. Teachers and school management need to strengthen disciplinary policies and promote positive behaviour management strategies to address indiscipline effectively.
2. School management, in collaboration with education ministries, should develop and enforce strict attendance monitoring systems to minimize truancy.
3. Education ministries and school leadership should provide regular training and support for teachers and administrators on managing student behaviour and enhancing academic excellence.
4. Parents, community leaders, and school management must work together to engage in awareness campaigns and interventions to address social deviant behaviours.

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