

Peer Influence as Correlate of School Skipping Behavior among Secondary School Students in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract: School skipping is one of the major maladaptive behaviours that constitute setback to academic achievement among students at different levels of education. This study was conducted to examine the correlation between peer influence and school skipping behaviour among secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study equally determined the levels of peer influence and school skipping behaviour among students with the aim of suggesting enduring solutions to the menace. The study adopted the descriptive survey of correlation type. A total sample of 382 students was selected through convenience and systematic sampling techniques. The data were collected through a researcher-designed instrument titled "*Peer Influence and School Skipping Behaviour Questionnaire*". It possessed a reliability value of 0.89 after being subjected to the split-half and Cronbach alfa formula. Data obtained were analysed with means score method and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that there is a high level of both peer influence and school skipping behaviour among secondary school students. Besides, there was a positive and significant correlation between peer influence and school skipping behaviour. It was therefore concluded that the pervasive influence of peers appears to be a driving force behind the high incidence of school skipping behaviour among students. Counselling services focusing on the peer intervention and adequate monitoring of students' attendance are recommended for promoting healthy peer influence and regular attendance.

Keyword: Peer influence, School skipping behaviour, Secondary school students, Correlation

Introduction

The habitual and unexcused absence from school, stands as a complex behaviour with far-reaching consequences for the academic endeavour of undergraduates in tertiary institutions. The issue of school skipping transcends mere absenteeism; it has become a lens through which one can understand deeper societal challenges and individual struggles. As contemporary educational system is evolving amidst the digital age, understanding the multifaceted factors influencing school skipping becomes paramount. Thus, different factors could account for the phenomenon especially among secondary school students and these may include, peer influence, economy, school environment and personality to mention just a few. Onyeaka et al. (2020) reported alcohol use, sexual risk behaviour and peer pressure as the risk factors for truancy in all three countries (Ghana, Benin, and Liberia) where the study was conducted. School skipping could be a manifestation of symptoms of underlying issues ranging from social status to the pervasive influence of series of environmental factors (Omolekan & Ajayi, 2023). In order to comprehend and address school skipping effectively, it is imperative to explore the interplay of these factors and the counselling implications.

School skipping, which is referred to students deliberately choosing to abstain from scheduled school activities, tutorials, or academic activities without formal authorization, has emerged as a serious behavioural malaise among students in Nigerian secondary schools (Ogunyide et al. (2020)). In contrast to casual absence, school skipping suggests a systematically documented lack of academic engagement and usually signals a deeper involvement of some social, psychological, and environmental factors affecting students' participation in education. The term school skipping is synonymous to truancy and school refusal owing to the similarities in their nature as well as the perpetrators. School Skipping Behaviour (SKB) or School Refusal Behaviour (SRB) is an action, which is in another word a child-motivated refusal to attend school or difficulty remaining in class for an entire day (Balakrishnan & Andi, 2019).

Generally, many students are potential school skippers. By different variables, many school truants may also be called school students. Students emerging as school skippers go through the 'hide-and-seek' between the academic and social worlds, in which the bond with the 'outside' world (friends, television, games, street, neighbours, and so on.) is more important to them (Denwigwe & Mbotto, 2022). School skipping transcends the simple act of missing classes: more than mere truancy. It gives a view of wider personal and social schematic implementing the undergraduate's behaviour. Among factors influencing such a behaviour in existing literature are peer group behaviour, economic pressures, milieu of the campus, personality attributions, and the growing influence of digital and social media (Moores et al., 2019).

Abubarkar (2021) highlighted some of the types of school skipping as occasional skipping, habitual skipping and casual skipping. Occasional school skipping is a type of truancy that occurs when a student does not constantly and continually absent himself from school. In this type of school skipping, the student levels of absenteeism from school without the permission of parents or school authority is irregular. Habitual school skipping is a type that occurs when a student (truant) is constantly absent from school without the due knowledge or consent of his/her parents or the school authorities. Habitual truants are mainly those students who miss numerous full days of school academic activities. Their frequencies of skipping school have become regular behaviour or habit. It is important to note that students who are habitual truants have high chances of falling behind in school work, decline in their academic performance and even lose their attachment or positive attitudes towards school (Sälzer & Heine, 2012). Casual school skipping is the type of absenteeism which occurs when the student is absent from school by chance. This type of school skipping is not regular and constant but happens by chance. A casual truant is student who keeps away from school and cuts up to 10 percent of the total number of working days during one academic session. A casual truant is an escapist to avoid unpleasant situation in the school, during school hours.

Balakrishnan and Andi (2019) reported a significant relationship between academic achievement and school satisfaction toward school refusal behaviour. The findings of this study suggested that academic difficulties and dissatisfaction towards school environment could be the important risk factors for school refusal behaviour. Skipping classes due to anxiety can be looked at as a valid reason due to the disturbing and uncomfortable thoughts and feelings that are associated with it. Some physical symptoms of skipping class due to anxiety displayed by students are: dizziness, headaches, nausea vomiting, diarrhea, shaking or trembling. Behavioural symptoms include: Crying, sadness, Anger or rage outbursts. Another explanation of school skipping is the adoption of a learned (imitation) or hand-me-down attitude. This refers to behaviours that individuals acquire from others, which guide how they respond to new situations. When positive, such behaviours encourage confidence and appropriate adjustment (Ogunyide et al. (2020). In this case, school skipping becomes a learned way of resisting the demands and routines of the school environment. Ansari et al. (2020) inferred that the absence of policy and programmes on school skipping that will promote regular school attendance by the government may also contribute significantly to school skipping behaviour. Thus, the present study aimed to interrogate the link between peer influence and the likelihood of school skipping behaviour among secondary school students.

Peer group means a small group of friends which have close relations with each other and they have regular interactions by sharing views and exchanging ideas with each other and do activities in groups. When the growing boys and girls step into the stage of

secondary education, they spend a large amount of time with their friends at school as compared to their early stage (elementary) education. In most cases students in secondary schools are often similar in term of age, social, attitude, interest, and educational status. Peer influence is used to describe the demands for compliance to customs of the group and exhibiting dedication and loyalty to the members of the group. As members of a peer group, the group has more influence on students and it is a factor that may influence disposition to school attendance. However, the social world to which students share same language, values, norms and mode of interaction may not be understood by the adults. Thus, it is through peers that students are most likely to be introduced and involved in school skipping and other maladaptive behaviours such as drinking, smoking, indecent act and dropping out of school (Abubakar, 2022). Nwakile et al (2025) found that a substantial proportion of students of higher institutions in Nigeria engaged in school skipping owing to peer influence and it negatively impacted their academic performance

Regular attendance is essential for effective learning, yet school skipping continues to persist among students, indicating the presence of strong influencing factors within the university environment. It is therefore essential to establish that school skipping is worrisome that many secondary school students deliberately miss classes and academic activities without valid academic reasons. This pattern has negative effects on students' regular class attendance, academic participation, and learning outcomes. Kearney (2022), in a study conducted in the United States, revealed that truancy was prevalent across various colleges and universities. Omolekan and Ajayi (2023) reported that students are influenced to skip classes by friends in order to socialise, engage in leisure activities, or accompany friends who have little interest in academic commitments and such have over time led to habitual school skipping and reduced academic engagement. Previous studies conducted by Adeniyi and Jinadu, (2021) established that peer influence significantly affects students' attendance related behaviour. The findings of Fehintola et al. (2025) have shown that peer factors are strong predictors of students' decision to attend or skip classes, sometimes exerting greater influence than family or institutional factors. Toledo (2023) reported that 75% of adolescent students engage in risky behaviours (including school skipping) due to peer influence. However, Okoiye and Okezie (2019) found that peer pressure did not significantly predict truancy among undergraduate students. There is limited evidence of empirical studies on school skipping behaviour of secondary school students in Kwara state, Nigeria. Therefore, there is a clear need to examine the correlation between peer influence and school skipping behaviour among secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Research Question

1. What is the level of peer influence among secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of school skipping behaviour among secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Ho. Peer influence will not significantly predict school skipping behaviour among secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Methodology

Research Design: The study used a descriptive survey design of correlation type because it sought to find the relationship between peer influence and school skipping behaviour of students by collecting data from a representative sample of the entire population.

Population and Sampling Procedure: The population of the study comprised all public secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria which was 84,623 as of 2018/2019 session, according to the Kwara State Ministry of Education and Human Capital Development (2020). Based on the sample size determination table of The Research Advisor (2006), a minimum sample size of 382 respondents was required at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The study adopted the convenience sampling procedure by reaching out to the target population (Public secondary school students) during the routine morning assembly where every student is expected to gather before proceeding to the classroom. The systematic sampling technique was used to select the desired number of participants in each school by picking participants at an interval of ten.

Instrumentation: The instrument used to collect data was adapted from Bamidele (2025). The original instrument was titled "Peer Influence, Social Media usage and Truancy Behavior Questionnaire (PISMTBQ)" and has a reliability coefficient of 0.86, 0.77 and 0.72 for the three scales respectively. After a thorough review the instrument used for the present study was titled "Peer Influence and School Skipping Behaviour Questionnaire (PISSBQ)". The instrument was structured on a modified four-point Likert type scale comprising Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree on a continuum of 4-1. Both peer influence and school skipping behaviour sections contained 10 items each. The average scoring pattern was used to make decision on the two research questions, hence average score 1.00-2.00 = Low; 2.01-3.00 = Average; and 3.01-4.00 = High. The reliability of the instrument was established through the split-half method and was subjected to the Cronbach alfa formula which yielded $r=0.89$, indicating adequate consistency.

Ethical Consideration: After obtaining necessary permission from the school authorities, the researchers sought informed consent of the respondents before

administering the instrument on them. Hence, there was no element of coercion during the administration of the instrument.

Method of Data Analysis: Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics of mean scores and the Pearson's Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) analysis. The hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 significance level.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of peer influence among secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the Respondents' Level of Peer Influence

As far as I am concerned, peers influence me;	Mean	S.D.
in decision making	3.51	.648
to become a absentee	3.49	.650
skip classes	3.47	.569
in their choice of role model	3.47	.584
feel important when we are together	3.43	.770
into doing things carelessly	3.40	.730
to believe their judgement about matters	3.36	.796
to get their desired respected above other persons	3.31	.798
push friends into doing everything they tell them to do	3.29	.731
Adhere to their values than that of my parents'	3.24	.762
Average mean	3.40	

Decision Key:

1.00-2.00 = Low

2.01-3.00 = Average

3.01-4.00 = High*

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' level of peer influence. The result shows that the level of peer influence among secondary school student is high (3.40). The implication is that peers exert influence on students' behaviour including school skipping. This include depending on peers for decision making, being influenced to become absentee, and skipping class.

Research Question 2: What is the level of school skippingbehaviour among Secondary School Students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank Order Analysis on the Respondents' Level of school skipping Behaviour

As far as I am concerned, I:	Mean	S.D.
believe in photocopying classmate notes than attending classes	3.49	.642
hang out with friends than attending classes	3.48	.630
do not bother if absent from school	3.43	.621
mostly enjoy staying outside the classroom	3.38	.652
unnecessarily seldom attend classes without permission	3.29	.584
have friends that keep me away from school	3.23	.541
enjoy friend's company more than staying in class	3.17	.541
enjoy playing outside the class during school hours	3.11	.560
Prefer staying at home than being in class	3.07	.497
do not see the need for regular school attendance	3.03	.640
Average mean	3.27	

Decision Key:

1.00-2.00 = Low

2.01-3.00 = Average

3.01-4.00 = **High***

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' level of school skipping behaviour. The result shows that the level of school skipping behaviour among secondary school student is high (3.27). The implication is that respondents involve significantly in school skipping behaviour which include hanging out with peers, photocopying notes than attending classes, not bothering if absent from school and many others.

Hypotheses Testing

Ho: *There is no significant correlation between peer influence and school skipping behaviour among secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria.*

Table 3: Pearson Showing Relationship between Peer Influence and School Skipping Behaviour of the Respondents

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	r	p-value
Peer Influence	402	39.56	7.32	400	.100 *	.045
School Skipping Behaviour	402	45.06	6.29			

* Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows calculated r -value of .100 and p -value of .045 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant correlation between peer influence and school skipping behaviour among secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria was therefore rejected. Hence, there is significant correlation between peer influence and school skipping behaviour among secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Discussion

The finding revealed that there is high level of peer influence among secondary school students. This might not be unconnected with the characteristics of the age group most of them belong to, which is adolescence. One major feature of adolescence is significant association with peers at the expense of parents in an effort to socialise and conform with the peer group. However, the type influence exerted by peers may sometimes promote maladaptive behaviour which include school skipping and perpetual deviance to the school rules and regulation. This finding corroborates Toledo (2023) report that 75% of adolescent students engage in risky behaviours (including school skipping) due to peer influence. Omolekan and Ajayi (2023) also found that students are influenced to skip classes by friends in order to socialise, engage in leisure activities, or accompany friends who have little interest in academic commitments and such have over time led to habitual school skipping and reduced academic engagement.

The finding revealed high level of school skipping behaviour among students which is characterised by photocopying classmate notes than attending classes; hanging out with peers instead of attending classes; and not bother about being absent from school among others. The finding indicates a prevalent trend of absenteeism among secondary school students, characterized by a propensity for ancillary activities such as duplicating peer notes and socialising, rather than attending classes. This phenomenon suggests a potential disconnect between students' academic priorities and their poor school attendance behavioural patterns. The result of the finding supports the study of Nwakile et al (2025) who found that a substantial proportion of students of higher institutions in Nigeria engaged in school skipping, which negatively impacted their academic performance. The finding is consistent with the study conducted by Kearney (2022) in the United States which revealed that truancy was prevalent across various colleges and universities. The reasons could be as a result of social distractions, like peer pressure or involvement in extracurricular activities.

The result of the hypothesis tested showed that there was significant correlation between peer influence and school skipping behaviour among secondary school in Kwara

State, Nigeria. The study's findings suggest that peer influence plays a significant role in shaping students' decisions to skip school. This implies that students' social environments and relationships with their peers can contribute to their absenteeism. This reason could be as a result of the fact that peers often exert strong influence over each other's behaviour through social norms and peer pressure. In the context of truancy, if a student's peers engage in skipping classes or academic activities, they may influence others to do the same to fit in or avoid social isolation. Understanding this dynamic can help educators and policymakers develop targeted interventions to address the issue. Fehintola et al. (2025) have earlier found that peer factors are strong predictors of students' decision to attend or skip classes, sometimes exerting greater influence than family or institutional factors. On the contrary, Okoiye and Okezie (2019) found that peer pressure did not significantly predict truancy among undergraduate students.

Conclusion

The findings of this study paint a concerning picture of secondary school students. The pervasive influence of peers appears to be a driving force behind the high incidence of school skipping behaviour, with students prioritising social interactions and shortcuts over academic engagement. To mitigate this trend, stakeholders must address the underlying dynamics of peer influence and work towards fostering a culture that values academic commitment and attendance. In addition, the significant relationship between peer influence and school skipping behaviour among secondary school students underscores the need for targeted interventions that address the social dynamics driving absenteeism.

Recommendations

- Counselling services focusing on the peer intervention should be provided in secondary schools in order to promote healthy influence of friends among students;
- There should be adequate monitoring of students' attendance which could involve modern technology that helps to take records of students' appearance in school and participation in academic activities in order to promote regular attendance; and
- School authority should develop a strategy for reinforcing regular attendance by recognising students that have satisfactory record of school attendance. This could serve as a reward for regular attendance and deterrence to school skipping

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