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S Prabha

M. Phil Scholar, P.G &
Research Department of Social
Work, Shrimati Indira Gandhi
College, Tiruchirappalli,
Tamil Nadu, India

Dr. K Kavitha Maheswari

Assistant Professor, P.G &
Research Department of Social
Work, Shrimati Indira Gandhi
College, Tiruchirappalli,
Tamil Nadu, India

Study on truant children

S Prabha and Dr. K Kavitha Maheswari

Abstract

Truancy is commonly considered as any unexcused or unverified absence from school. Causes of truancy may include lack of guidance or parental monitoring and supervision, drug or alcohol and other substance abuse, lack of awareness of attendance policies and regulations and having poor attitude towards education. The study on truant children focuses on their attitude towards school and their behavioral problems. The design of the study is descriptive in nature. It attempts to describe the socio-demographic variables, their attitude towards school infrastructure, teacher student relationship, parent child relationship, peer group influence and their behavioral problems. The study was conducted in a government higher secondary school, Karur District. The truant children from sixth standard to twelfth standard constituted the universe of this study. They were identified with the help of the head master and the school teachers. They were 70 students who are found as having truant behavior are the universe of this study and census method was adopted for sampling. The researcher used self prepared structured interview schedule as tool to collect the required data from the respondents. The major findings of the study are discussed in the full paper.

Keywords: Truancy, attitude, behavioral problems, peer influence, relationship

Introduction

Truancy is commonly considered as any unexcused or unverified absence from school. Causes of truancy may include lack of guidance or parental monitoring and supervision, drug or alcohol and other substance abuse, lack of awareness of attendance policies and regulations and having poor attitude towards education. The school environment like school infrastructure, size, teacher's attitude, attitudes of students and administrators, the diverse cultural and learning styles of minority students and lack of meaningful activities in the school are responsible as factors of school influencing chronic absenteeism. The reasons like broken families, employed students, single-parent families, lack of transportation facilities and long distance between school and home and childcare, high mobility rates and parents with multiple jobs are of economic reasons. Found the positive correlation between truant youth and the incidence of day time crime. Wrote a book on "Behavioral problems of school children" and they stated in the book that, socio economic background, television, cinema, and defective child rearing practices are the influencing factors for the behavioral problems. The global school based survey (2008) by Ster Siziya, Adamen. S. Mulla & Emmoanuel Rudatsirikira found that Truancy was associated with lower school grade, having been victim of bullying, having gone hungry sometimes because poverty and of lack of food at home and less parental observation and supervision. Study on truancy among primary school pupils in Tanzania conducted in 2002 reveals that parents are responsible for their children attitudes, habits and values that help to shape their character and personality and enable them to remain with them throughout their life. Parents are the first teacher but unfortunately few parents have neither time nor interest ability to guide their children everything they need to know to lead a meaningful life. Restuta Shirima (2002) ^[3] insisted that truancy is the major influencing factor affecting academic performance among secondary school students in Tanzania, Kigamboni ward in Dar es Salaam inclusive. Absenteeism is dangerous factor to student's achievement, promotion, higher education, self-esteem and employment potential. Clearly, students who miss school fall behind their peers in the classroom and poor in studies. This, in turn leads to low self-esteem and increase the likelihood that at-risk students will drop out of school. (Azizi Yahya *et al.* 2010) ^[1].

Correspondence

S Prabha

M. Phil Scholar, P.G &
Research Department of Social
Work, Shrimati Indira Gandhi
College, Tiruchirappalli,
Tamil Nadu, India

Such as maladjustment, a lower general level of self-esteem and academic self-concept, anxiety and lower career aspirations are due to chronic illegal absenteeism.

Chronic absenteeism is directly associated poor academic results. A 2008 study of graduation patterns in Chicago Public Schools, found that the number of days students were absent in eighth grade was eight times more predictive of freshman year course failure than eighth grade test scores Allensworth, E. & J. Easton, (2008) ^[18]. The same study found that freshman year absences were nearly as predictive of graduation rates as grade point average (GPA) and course failures, two more commonly used metrics for identifying students at risk of not graduating Allensworth, E. & J. Easton (2008) ^[18]. A study of Baltimore City Public Schools found that chronic absenteeism was the strongest sixth grade predictor of not graduating high school Baltimore Education Research Consortium (2011) ^[19]. Chronic absenteeism in kindergarten is associated with lower achievement in reading and math in later grades, even when controlling for a child's family income, race, disability status, attitudes toward school, socio-emotional development, age at kindergarten entry, type of kindergarten program, and preschool experience Romero, M. & Lee, Y. (2007) ^[20]. Chronic absenteeism has also been linked to poor socio-emotional outcomes, even after controlling for a rich set of student factors including lagged socio-emotional measures. Teenage truancy, on the other hand, is more frequently associated with student- or school-factors, such as fear of bullying or disengagement with school. For example, in a recent Evidence Speaks post, Jing Liu and Susanna Loeb reported that high school teachers have differential effects on unexcused class absences—that is, when students miss only part of the school day—highlighting how the academic environment can influence school attendance.

Materials and methods

Aim of the study

The study on truant children focuses on their attitude towards school and their behavioral problems.

Research design

The design of the study is descriptive in nature. It attempts to describe the socio-demographic variables, their attitude towards school infrastructure, teacher student relationship, parent child relationship, peer group influence and their behavioral problems.

Universe and sampling

The study was conducted in a government higher secondary school, Karur District. The truant children from sixth standard to twelfth standard constituted the universe of this study. They were identified with the help of the head master and the school teachers. They were 70 students who are found as having truant behavior are the universe of this study and census method was adopted and complete enumeration of 70 students were the sample of this study. The respondents were chronic absentees having very poor attendance according to the school records.

Pilot study and pretest

In order to know the feasibility of conducting the study, the researcher visited the school and got permission from the Head master and explained about the research objectives. Then with the help of the teachers the researcher identified the universe.

Pre test was conducted with 5 respondents to ensure the fitness of the tool of data. There were no changes taken place in the interview schedule and hence the pretested respondents were included in the sample.

Tools of data collection

The researcher used self prepared structured interview schedule as tool to collect the required data from the respondents. The interview schedule included open and closed ended questions covering certain aspects like socio demographic variables, their attitude towards school infrastructure, teacher student relationship, parent child relationship, peer group influence and their behavioral problems.

Findings and discussion

Personal data

From the analysis it is revealed that more than one third of the respondents (34.2%) were in the age group of 14 years. A vast majority of the respondents were male (84.3%). A very high percent of the respondents belonged to Hinduism (95.7%). Nearly half of the respondents belonged to schedule caste(41.4%). A vast majority of the respondents were hailing from rural area and belonged to nuclear family. 80% of the respondents were having 4-6 members in their family.

Attitude towards school infrastructure

A vast majority of the respondents (85.7%) expressed that they are not having sufficient spacious classrooms and 91.4% of the respondents were of the opinion that the physical surroundings such as ventilation and lighting is not at good level. More than 4/5th of the respondents felt that the facilities like playground, laboratory equipment, adequate books in the library, multimedia supported classroom and safe drinking water facilities need improvement.

Teacher- student relationship

85.7% of the respondents opined that their teachers and impartial. Nearly one fourth of the respondents bunked classes to escape from punishment. 74.3% of the respondents were against corporal punishments. A very high percentage (95.7%) of the respondents never raised any doubts in the class regarding the subject. 90% of the respondents expressed that their teachers would enquire the students when the skip classes. 82.9% of the respondents experienced failure in their tests and exams. A little less than 3/4th of the respondents were not interested in their studies. 60% of the respondents experienced punishments given directly by the head masters. A vast majority of the respondents (91.4%) did not have good relationship with their teachers. The same percentage of the respondents opined that there was no regular parent teachers meet conducted.

More than half of the respondents (52.9%) attended guest lectures on health and moral education organized by their school.

Parent child relationship

A high percentage of the respondents (81.4%) of the respondents expressed that their teachers did not bring to the notice of their parents regarding their truant behavior. 81.4% of the respondents' parents were ignorant of their wards'

poor academic performance. The same percentage of the respondents informed that their parents did not encourage their studies and academic activities. 62.9% of the respondents suffered family problems like poverty, poor parenting, alcoholic parents and broken families. A vast majority of the respondents are not having any interest or aspiration for higher education; they wanted to discontinue their studies. A little more than 3/4th of the respondents' fathers were chronic alcoholics and the respondents having such alcoholic parents suffered a lot in their parent-child relationship.

Behavioral problems

Nearly half of the respondents (47.1%) did not have good rapport with their classmates. More than ¾ of the respondents (77.1%) had the problem of inferiority complex due to their poor academic performance. 97.1% of the respondents did not obey or honor the rules and regulations of their school due to their detachment towards academic activities and poor study involvement. 54.3% of the respondents addicted to smoking and 24.3% of the respondents occasionally consume alcohol and all those respondents were boys only. 70% of the respondents had negative attitude towards their parents and teachers.

Peer group influence

A vast majority of the respondents (89.2%) had peer team consisted of more than five members which in turn worsen their truant behavior. 61.4% of the respondents bunked classes and with their peer team would go for movies. In their peer team both their classmates and friends from neighborhood also took part. 85.7% of the respondents opined that they were not advised positively by their friends indeed most of the time they were influenced negatively by their peer team. A little more than half of the respondents (54.3%) had the habit of sharing their family problems with their peer group and the remaining never disclosed any family issues with their friends. Almost all the respondents expressed that they never discussed anything related to studies

Conclusion

Truancy is a behavioral problem and it can be effectively dealt by the professional social work interventions such as behavioral modification, counseling, career guidance, continuous behavior assessment and support system. Social group work activities among selected truant students will be useful. Parents and teachers must given proper guidance and clarification about how to deal with truant children like giving individual attention to them, taking care of their studies instead of punishing and negatively treating them.

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