

ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: The study examined attendance management strategies and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey design, with two research questions and two null hypotheses. The study captured 202 principals and 310 vice principals (512 population). Using a stratified random sampling technique, 290 principals and vice principals representing 57% of the population were selected. A self-designed research instrument titled "Attendance Management Strategies and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (AMSSAPQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A requested the demographic data of respondents, while Section B has two (2) sub-sections with 12 items, structured on a modified four-point Likert-type rating scale. The instrument was validated, and the reliability was ascertained using the test-retest method, with a reliability coefficient of 0.85. Data collected were analysed with mean and standard deviation statistics for research questions and independent t-test for the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that various attendance management strategies include: monitoring, incentives and rewards, discipline, meeting with parents, counseling, and collaborating. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the various attendance management strategies and students' academic performance. Also, it was revealed that regular monitoring of students' attendance enhances students' academic performance. Therefore, there is a significant difference between principals' regular monitoring of students' attendance and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. It was therefore recommended among others that principals should invest in attendance management systems, and principals should organize a stronger home-school collaboration framework to address the root causes of absenteeism.

Keywords: Attendance, Management Strategies, Students, Academic Performance, Public, Secondary Schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is regarded as the cornerstone of societal development, which equipped individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to navigate and contribute to the society. Secondary education, in particular, serves as a critical phase in a student's academic journey, which prepare them for higher education or professional pursuits (UNESCO, 2017). During this stage, students engage with specialized curricula, develop critical thinking skills, and build the

academic pillar required for future success. However, the effectiveness of secondary education depends significantly on students' consistent participation in the learning process, which is heavily influenced by their attendance.

Attendance is a significant component of the school. It directly influences students' commitment, learning outcomes, and overall academic performance. Regular attendance ensures that students participate in classroom activities, interact with teachers, and access learning, which are essential for academic performance (Gottfried, 2019). In recent years, schools have implemented various attendance management strategies, such as automated attendance tracking systems, parental involvement programs, and incentive-based interventions, to reduce absenteeism and enhance students' academic performance. These strategies aim to address the challenges of absenteeism, which has been linked to lower academic performance, decreased motivation, and higher dropout rates (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Ololube (2013, 2017) explained that attendance at schools is not merely being bodily present but including actual participation in the work and activities of the school. Attendance can be grouped into two extremes of being 'a mere appearance of the students at school' and 'the students present during the whole day'. However, some students may truly be at the assembly during the collective worship period and leave school before the closing hour after the roll might have been called in the morning. In some cases, some of these students may truly be in school but rather engage themselves in illegal activities such as sleeping, reading negatively motivated novels, playing with electronic devices (handsets, androids, ipads, etc.) or going to the field to play games among others (Rogers, 2010).

Fagbenle (2018) identified two types of attendance as regular attendance and irregular attendance. According to the Fagbenle, regular attendance is characterized as being present, punctual and being involved in the activities of the school. The regular students will always come to school except for some certain reasons beyond their control, which may probably be sickness, death, or accident, which are regarded as legal absenteeism in the dictionary of education. Epstein and Sheldon (2020) asserted that regular school attendance is a commitment to classroom time and activities right from enrolment to finalization of a full academic programme. On the other hand, irregular attendance for whatever causes is a distress call. It can therefore be described as a deliberate absenteeism of oneself from school for no just cause. Ololube (2013), further described irregular attendance as a failure of the students to be physically present in the school for reasons that are not recognized by the school authority as legitimate.

High levels of attendance are associated with better academic performance, increased graduation rates, and improved socioemotional development (Gottfried, 2014). Occasional absenteeism cannot be ruled out because students may miss some school activities and lessons every now and then, but it becomes a problem if the student is away from school for many days. According to Aburuz (2019), being absent from school is said to be chronic when students miss more than 10 percent of the overall school days. Missing just two days of school in a month is a warning sign against academic trouble.

According to Iyamu and Obiunu (2006), the effect of irregular attendance/absenteeism in schools have been identified as: academic underachievement which increases costs wastage; difficulty in making friends which could lead to boredom, loss of confidence and engagement in premature sexual activities which could lead to pregnancy resulting in dropout and stress among young adults. Society suffers as the children of school age hang around on the streets intimidating other people and stealing properties of those in school and other places of work (Ololube, 2012). Oghuvbu (2010) studied the attendance and academic performance of

secondary school students in Delta State, Nigeria, and concluded that there is a fair positive correlation between attendance and academic performance. It was also revealed that irregular attendance could also result to poor academic achievements, loss of friends and partners, disruption in class when absentees return to school, difficulty in keeping accurate records, reduced ability to meet instructional targets and damaged school reputations.

Gottfried (2015) stated that principals should clearly communicate the importance of attendance to both students and parents, setting clear expectations regarding attendance can help students understand its significance for their academic performance. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) detailed that principals can use attendance records to identify patterns and trends, allowing them to intervene early with students who are frequently absent.

The principal is saddled with the responsibilities of students' safety, students' well-being, students' attendance and their academic performance. In other to improve students' attendance in school, principals should organize events or initiatives to celebrate attendance milestones, such as perfect attendance weeks or months. This can create a sense of community and motivation among students to maintain regular attendance. However, while various strategies have been proposed to improve attendance in schools, there remains a need for empirical research to examine attendance management strategies to enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Statement of the Problem

Absenteeism has remains a significant challenge in secondary schools, contributing to gaps in learning and poor academic performance. Despite the implementation of various attendance management strategies, such as digital monitoring systems and student engagement programs, many schools continue to report high rates of absenteeism, which negatively affect students' academic performance (Allensworth & Evans, 2016).

Observation has showed that this situation is common among secondary schools students. When students' enter the senior secondary examination class (SS3), they tend to be irregular in school (Jude, 2025). This situation is known to persist even to the commencement of their final examination among secondary school students, Bayelsa State not exempted. Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of specific attendance management strategies to improve students' academic performance, particularly in the in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. This gap in research creates uncertainty about which strategies are most effective in reducing absenteeism and enhancing student outcomes. Therefore, this study strive to examine attendance management strategies and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to examine attendance management strategies and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. While the specific objectives are:

- Determine the various attendance management strategies that enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
- Ascertain the extent to which principals regularly monitor students' attendance to enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

- What are the various attendance management strategies to enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
- To what extent do principals regularly monitor students' attendance and enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- There is no significant difference on the mean rating of vice principal and principals on the various attendance management strategies and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
- There is no significant difference in the mean rating of vice principal and principals on the extent principals regularly monitor students' attendance and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Understanding the current approach, the research on attendance management strategies and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria necessitates a thorough review of related empirical studies. This review serves to identify the key findings, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks that have influenced the field, providing a context for the current study. Focusing on the relationship between attendance management strategies and students' academic performance the review cover studies conducted across diverse settings and populations. These insights did not only helped to refine the research questions and hypotheses for the present study but also highlight gaps in the literature that this research seeks to address.

Gottfried (2019) conducted a research in the United States, examining the effects of school attendance interventions, such as automated attendance tracking and parental notifications, on student achievement in urban elementary schools. The findings revealed that schools implementing automated systems reduced absenteeism by 12% and improved students' reading and math test scores by approximately 0.15 standard deviations.

Similarly, Allensworth and Evans (2016) investigated the role of attendance monitoring and incentive-based programs in Chicago high schools. Their study found that students who participated in attendance improvement programs, which included rewards for consistent attendance and counseling for at-risk students, had a 10% higher attendance rate and achieved a 0.25 increase in GPA compared to a control group. The researchers emphasized the importance of combining punitive and supportive strategies to address diverse causes of absenteeism, such as family responsibilities and health issues. However, the study did not explore the long-term sustainability of these interventions.

Balfanz et al. (2018) evaluated the impact of community-based attendance initiatives in middle schools, focusing on partnerships between schools and local organizations to monitor and support student attendance. Their findings indicated that schools with strong community involvement reduced chronic absenteeism by 18% over two years, leading to improved academic performance in standardized tests. The study highlighted the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder approaches but noted challenges in scaling these strategies due to resource limitations and varying community engagement levels.

Chang et al. (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study in a rural school district, analyzing the relationship between attendance rates and academic achievement among secondary students. The results showed that students with attendance rates above 90% scored 20% higher on end-of-year exams than those with absenteeism (missing 10% or more of school days). The qualitative data revealed that students valued attendance policies that provided clear communication and support, such as make-up classes, but felt demotivated by strict disciplinary measures. In a related study, Robinson et al. (2020) examined the mediating role of attendance in the relationship between school climate and academic performance in Australian secondary schools. Their structural equation modeling showed that a positive school climate, including effective attendance management, indirectly improved academic performance by fostering student engagement and reducing absenteeism. However, the study did not specifically isolate the types of attendance strategies that were most to these outcomes, limiting its practical implications.

Mills et al. (2021) opined that the strategies to improve students' attendance are: developing better relationships with students and the school community, creating a positive school climate, and developing both rewards and sanctions in regards to attendance; all of which are typically accompanied by a systematic monitoring of data. Such relationships have been shown to enhance communication and foster a school climate in which staff are viewed as approachable. Outreach activities and home visits, as well as encouraging parents to visit the school for classroom and extra curricula activities supports the development of these relationships (Stone & Stone, 2011).

Keppens et al. (2019) compared administrative attendance data collected by schools with self-reported attendance data from the same group of students (age 15–16) in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium (N = 4344). The study revealed a weak association between self-reported unauthorized school absenteeism and registered unauthorized school absenteeism. Boys in technical and vocational tracks and students who speak a foreign language at home, with a less-educated mother and who receive a school allowance received more registered unauthorized absences than they reported themselves. In addition, students with school refusal and who were often authorized absent from school received more registered unauthorized absences compared to their self-reported unauthorized school absenteeism.

In a study by Lehr et al. (2004), the effectiveness of the Check and Connect program was examined as a strategy to reduce student absenteeism from elementary through high school. The program, designed to prevent dropout among high school students with learning, emotional, or behavioral disabilities, assigns each student a mentor: such as a graduate student, special education teacher, or experienced community member who supports them year-round. Lehr et al. found that students who participated in the program for two years showed a significant reduction in absenteeism.

Olunfunke and Oluwadailola (2014) investigated the causes of attendance challenges and their impact on the academic performance of secondary school students in Osun State, Nigeria. Data were collected from 3,050 students across 61 state-owned secondary schools. The study

found a positive correlation between students' attendance scores and their examination performance across the state's ten constituencies. Parents and guardians identified key causes of absenteeism as poverty ($M = 3.96$), excessive school-imposed fees ($M = 3.95$), and the high cost of instructional materials ($M = 3.93$). A Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 26.35 > 7.32$) confirmed a significant relationship between class attendance and students' academic performance.

Wadesango and Machigambi (2011) conducted a research to determine the causes and structural effects of student absenteeism using three South African universities as case studies. Using the survey research design, data were collected through interviews and self-administered questionnaires. The result of the analysis revealed that in-school factors such as lack of interest in subject matter, poor teaching strategies by lecturers, unfavourable infrastructure for learning and poor student-lecturer relationship were the main determinants of student absenteeism.

Demir and Karabeyoglu (2016) studied factors influencing absenteeism among high school students using questionnaires from 581 students in grades 9 to 11. The study used scales on school attachment, school climate, and quality of life. Results showed that negative perceptions of the school environment explained 83% of absenteeism-related factors, while parental influence accounted for only 22%.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive survey design. The research was guided with two research questions and two null hypotheses. The population of the study is 512 comprises 202 principals and 310 vice principals from all the public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. Using a stratified random sampling technique, 290 principals and vice principals representing 99% of the population were selected. A self-design research instrument titled, "Attendance Management Strategies and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (AMSSAPQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was structured along the lines of the research questions, with two sections (A and B). Section A requested for the demographic data of respondents, while B has two (2) sub-section with 12 items, structured on a modified four-point Likert type rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Two experts in measurement and evaluation validated the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using test-retest method, and the obtained reliability coefficient was 0.85. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages for demographic variables of respondents. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer the research questions, while independent t-test was used to test the formulated null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

PRESENTATION OF DATE

Data collected were analysed and interpreted as following:

Table 1: Categories of the Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Vice Principal	190	65.5%
Principal	100	34.5%
Total	290	100%

Table 1 shows that the vice principals respondents are 190 (65.5%), while principals' respondents are 100 (34.5%). This implies that majority of the respondents were vice principals.

Table 2: Years of the Experience of the Respondents

Years	Frequency	Percentage
16yrs above	154	53.1%
11-15yr	87	30.0%
6-10yrs	29	10.0%
1-5yrs	20	6.9%
Total	290	100%

Table 2 shows that respondents with 16 years of work experience has the highest frequency of 154 (53.1%), followed by 11-15 with 87 (30%), followed by 6-10 with 29 (10%), and followed by 1-5 with 20 frequency (6.9%).

Table 3: School of the Respondents According to Local Government Area (LGA)

S/N	LGA.	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Brass	12	4.1%
2.	Southern-Ijaw	28	9.7%
3.	Sabgama	45	15.7%
4.	Ogia	40	14.0%
5.	Yenagoa	84	29.0%
6.	Kolokuma/Opokuma	17	5.9%
7.	Nembe	20	6.9%
8.	Ekeremor	44	15.2%
	Total	290	100%

Table 3 shows the LGA. of the respondents, Yenagoa highest with 84 respondents (29%), followed by Sabgama with 45 respondents (15.7%), followed Ekeremor with 44 respondents (15.2%), followed by Ogia with 40 respondents (9.7%), followed by Southern-Ijaw with 28 respondents (9.7%), followed by Nembe with 20 respondents (6.9%), followed by Kolokuma/Opokuma with 17 respondents (5.9%), and followed by Brass with 12 respondents (4.1%).

Research Question One: What are the various attendance management strategies to enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 4: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Principals and Vice Principals on the Various Attendance Management Strategies that Enhance Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

S/N	Items	Vice Principal		Principal		Mean set	Decision
		X ₁	S.D ₁	X ₂	S.D ₂		
1	Principals use monitoring and record-keeping as attendance management strategy	2.83	1.19	3.10	1.05	2.96	Agree
2	Principals use incentives and rewards to manage students attendance	3.44	1.15	3.50	1.00	3.47	Agree

3	Principals use disciplin as attendance management strategy	3.33	1.12	3.20	1.20	3.26	Agree
4	Principals use meeting with parents to manage students attendance	3.30	0.81	3.40	0.75	3.35	Agree
5	Principals use counseling to manage students attendance for academic performance	3.75	0.49	3.80	0.55	3.78	Agree
6	Principals collaborate with community and agencies to manage students attendance	3.59	0.82	3.60	0.85	3.60	Agree
Grand Mean		3.37	0.93	3.43	0.90	3.40.	Agree

Table 4 shows the various attendance management strategies use to enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. In table 4, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 have mean values higher than the criterion mean of 2.5. Moreover, the grand mean of the vice principals, principals and the mean set are 3.37, 3.43 and 3.40 respectively. This shows that both vice principals and principals agree that monitoring and record-keeping, incentives and rewards, disciplinary, meeting with parents, counseling and collaborate with community and agencies are strategies use to enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Question Two: To what extent do principals regularly monitor students' attendance and enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 5: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Principals and Vice Principals on the extent principals regularly monitor Students' Attendance and Enhance Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

S/N	Items	Vice Principal		Principal		Mean set	Decision
		X ₁	S.D ₁	X ₂	S.D ₂		
1	Principals use daily attendance checks to monitor students' attendance to enhance academic performance	2.64	1.23	2.80	1.10	2.72	Agree
2	Principals review attendance report on a monthly basis	2.09	1.00	2.50	0.95	2.30	Disagree
3	Principals use attendance data of check students' attendance rate to enhance academic performance	3.14	0.89	3.30	0.85	3.22	Agree
4	Follow-up mechanisms is use to manage students' academic performance	3.70	0.65	3.40	0.70	3.55	Agree
5	Policy enforcement is use to manage students' academic performance	2.18	0.96	2.00	1.05	2.09	Disagree
6	Principals ensure that interventions are in place, such as: home visit, counseling sessions and disciplinary action for habitual absenteeism.	1.90	0.78	2.20	0.80	2.05	Disagree
Grand Mean		2.61	0.92	2.70	0.91	2.66	Agree

Table 5 shows the extent principals regularly monitor students' attendance and enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. In table 5, items 2, 5, and 6 have mean values lower than the criterion mean of 2.5, while items 1, 3, and 4 have mean values greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. Moreover, the grand mean of the vice principals, principals and the mean set are 3.37, 3.43 and 3.40 respectively, which is greater than the

criterion mean of 2.5. This shows that both vice principals and principals agree that principals regular monitoring students' attendance enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference on the mean ratings of vice principal and principals on the various attendance management strategies that enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 6: Independent Sampled t-test of the Difference in the mean ratings of vice principal and principals on the various attendance management strategies that enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p-value
Vice Principal	190	15.75	4.05	288	20.811	0.000
Principal	100	7.16	1.09			

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 6 shows that the mean rating of vice principal respondents (Mean = 15.75, standard deviation = 4.05) is greater than the mean rating of Principal respondents (Mean = 7.16, standard deviation = 1.09). Table 6 also shows the t-value of 20.811, with p-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha value, this means that there is a significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Conclusively, there is a significant difference on the ratings of vice principal and principals on the various attendance management strategies and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of vice principal and principals on the extent principals regularly monitor students' attendance and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 7: Independent Sampled t-test of the Difference in the Mean Rating of vice Principal and Principals on the Extent Principals Regularly Monitor Students' Attendance and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Vice Principal	190	18.83	2.72	288	29.074	0.000
Principal	100	9.73	2.14			

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 7 shows that the mean rating of vice principal respondents (Mean = 18.83, standard deviation = 2.72) is greater than the mean rating of Principal respondents (Mean = 9.73, standard deviation = 2.14). Table 7 also shows the t-value of 29.074, with p-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha value, this means that there is a significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Conclusively, there is a significant difference on the mean rating of vice principal and principals on the extent principals

regularly monitor students' attendance and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The focus of this study is to ascertain the extent of attendance management strategies and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. So, the summary of the findings have been provided to serves as the basis for the discussion of findings.

Various Attendance Management Strategies that Enhance Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

The study's findings show that both vice principals and principals agree that monitoring and record-keeping, incentives and rewards, disciplinary measures, meeting with parents, counseling and collaborating with community and agencies are strategies to enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. Therefore, there is a significant difference on the ratings of vice principals and principals on the various attendance management strategies and enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

The findings align with Mills, et al., (2021), opined that the strategies to improve students' attendance are: developing better relationships with students and the school community, creating a positive school climate, and developing both rewards and sanctions in regards to attendance; all of which are typically accompanied by a systematic monitoring of data. Also, Gottfried (2019) conducted a research in the United States, examining the effects of school attendance interventions, such as automated attendance tracking and parental notifications, on student achievement in urban elementary schools. The findings revealed that schools implementing automated systems reduced absenteeism by 12% and improved students' reading and math test scores by approximately 0.15 standard deviations.

Extent Principals Regularly Monitor Students' Attendance and Enhance Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

The study's findings show that both vice principals and principals agree that regular monitoring of students' attendance enhances students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. Therefore, there is a significant difference on the mean rating of vice principals and principals on the extent principals regularly monitor students' attendance and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The findings align with Lehr et al., (2004) whose founding shows that students who participated in the Check and Connect program for a period of two years showed a decrease in absenteeism.

CONCLUSION

Effective attendance management is a key determinant of academic success in public secondary schools. Strengthening attendance policies, enhancing stakeholder collaboration, and providing adequate monitoring resources are essential steps toward improving students' academic performance in the 21st century educational system. The extent to which principals monitor attendance significantly influences students' academic outcomes. Regular monitoring helps to

quickly identify attendance problems and implement timely interventions. Thus, principals who are proactive in attendance supervision contribute significantly to enhancing students' academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Principals should attend data analysis and intervention strategies training on the various attendance management strategies.
- Principal should invest on attendance management systems.
- Principals should organize a stronger home-school collaboration frameworks to address the root causes of absenteeism.

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