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MANAGING TEACHERS' TRUANCY FOR IMPROVED EDUCATION DELIVERY IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Two research questions were raised and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of all 302 public Senior Secondary School principals in the 302 schools in Rivers State, comprising of 54 urban and 248 rural principals. Census sampling technique was adopted to sample the entire population since it was of a manageable size. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher and titled "Managing Teachers' Truancy for Improved Education Delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State Questionnaire (MTTIEDPSSRSQ)". The reliability coefficient of the instruments was determined using test-retest method and analyzed with Pearson Product Moment Correlation and was found to be .720. Out of the 302 copies of the instrument that were administered to the respondents, 278 copies were successfully retrieved and used for the study representing 92% return rate. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation statistics while the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance using independent samples t-test. The findings of the study revealed that the strategies adopted by school administrators in managing teachers' truancy in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State include the use of attendance monitoring system and instructional supervision. It was also found that these strategies were effective to a high extent in managing truancy among teachers. Furthermore, the study found no significant difference in the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent the strategies were effective in managing teachers' truancy. The study concluded that teachers' truancy is a menace that seriously undermined instructional productivity in schools and must thus be nipped in the bud by school administrators for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The study recommended among others, that principals should be decisive and firm in disciplining truant teachers so as to serve as deterrent to others in order to ensure school effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Keywords: Teachers' Truancy, Attendance Monitoring, Instructional Supervision, Public, Senior, Secondary School, Education Delivery, Rivers State.

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers in the present day Nigeria are apparently living in the past glory of the teaching profession in the country. The teaching profession is globally acknowledged as the noblest of all professions as it is indisputably the mother of every other profession under the sun. The sacrifices of teachers, just like those of mothers in the conception, birthing, nurturing and development of every other profession and professionals, which translate to the building and development of nations world over are simply priceless, and it is widely acknowledged that no amount of physical reward can adequately suffice for the jobs performed by teachers in all levels of education. Besides, no index has yet been found for accurately measuring the efforts of ideal teachers. This has given rise to the popular saying that a teacher's reward is in heaven - acknowledging the fact that no amount of monetary or non-monetary compensation is commensurate with teachers' efforts, which impact is felt at individual child's level, school levels, community levels, state, national and global levels, and which even outlives the teachers' themselves. As such, every society all over the world holds its teachers in high esteem as role models and as indispensable variables in their existence, survival, growth and development equations. This used to be the case in Nigeria, but presently, stakeholders of secondary education are raising concerns over the obvious dwindling level of teachers' commitment to their jobs, which is having direct strong negative impact on the quality of education delivery and outputs in public Senior Secondary Schools in the country.

The high level of regard and respect accorded teachers and the teaching profession in Nigeria seems to be fast losing its weight in the last few decades as a result of wide-ranging growing cases and incidents of teachers' unprofessional practices and workplace deviant behaviours which literature describes as education corruption (Tuzun & Kalemci, 2017; Ugoani, 2016). These are behaviours which generally water down teachers' effectiveness to the detriment of the instructional process and the quality of education at the various levels of education in Nigeria. The most prominent among these deviant behaviours, which becomes the crux of this study, is the problem of teachers' truancy.

Truancy is a phenomenon that was initially peculiar to students' deviance and delinquent behaviour of unauthorized absenteeism from school (mostly without the permission or knowledge of parents and school authorities) an act that teachers seriously frowned at and made efforts to curb among students, but dishearteningly, this unceremonious behaviour has taken strong grip on teachers, too. While the public secondary school system is still grappling with managing incidents of unavoidable absenteeism - devising means of covering up vacuums created by unavoidably absent teachers (which often arises as a result of teachers' medical/health challenges, antenatal and post natal leaves, etc. but with the full consent and approval of the school administrations, although its negative impact on the teaching-learning process remains inevitable), this ugly trend of teachers deliberately absenting themselves from work (either totally or partially) is becoming a menace that needs proactive attention by relevant authorities as its impact on the instructional process and whole school wellbeing is simply debilitating.

The phenomenon of teachers' truancy is multidimensional. It encompasses various dimensions and manifestations of absenteeism deliberately perpetrated by teachers. This is inclusive of total absenteeism from school (not showing up at work); absenteeism from classroom (though present in school, which amounts to abuse of the instructional timetable); being present in the classroom but not delivering teaching within an instructional period; whiling away instructional time on irrelevant talks and activities; absence of emotional attachment to the teaching exercise; insipid dispensing of activities; withdrawal or withholding of effort;

intentionally working slow; and every other forms of unethical and unprofessional behaviour that amounts to wastage of instructional time.

The effects of teachers' truancy on public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State are simply far-reaching. Nigerian educational system is still at its infantile stage when compared to the educational systems of developed countries, and as such, virtually every aspect of school operation is wholly dependent on the physical presence of teachers. Teachers are needed in the school for administrative duties, for instructional activities, for curricular and extracurricular activities coordination, for supervision and coordination of students, as counselors, and for several other reasons. When they are absent from the school without prior knowledge and approval of the school principal, both administrative and non-administrative processes are negatively impacted leading to retardation in school progress.

In some public Senior Secondary Schools, especially in rural communities, it is not unlikely to find some teachers who appear more powerful or more influential than the school principal, especially when they are natives who have worked/served in the school for very long periods of time and the principal is a non-indigene who got newly transferred to the school or has not been in the school for a considerable period of time. Some of such teachers are reputed for not submitting to their principals' leadership and this happens mostly when they seem to have some strong connections in the ministry. In situations where such teachers become truant, there may be hardly anything the principal can do about it, and the behaviours of such truant teachers have a way of dampening the commitment level of other teachers. When this happens, teachers' productivity is negatively impacted to the detriment of students' learning outcomes and of whole school quality.

Several studies have also established strong correlation between teachers' absenteeism and students' poor academic performance (Medrano, 2019; O'Sullivan, 2022; Ugoani, 2016). It is easy to agree with these literatures that teachers' truancy results to instructional defects such as absence of learning; loss of classroom control; wide range of students' deviant behaviours; loss of teacher-student interaction, which is a critical necessity for students' learning; poor teacher-students relationship; inability to cover the instructional syllabus, which negatively impacts on students' knowledge; half-baked students; students' truancy; and ultimately poor academic achievement of students.

Apart from the negative impact on students' learning, teachers' truancy also negatively impacts on students' character. The teacher is a role model whom students' look up to. In addition to modeling in behaviour, teachers act in loco parentis to students. As parents of the students in the school, they carry out counseling roles and are custodians of discipline in the school. Truancy of teachers, whether in physical absence from duty or in withdrawal of wholehearted services or in nonchalance on the process of instructional delivery simply passes wrong signals to these students who look up to them as the more knowledgeable others. Thus, teachers' truancy in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State is rightly fingered as one of the contributory factors to the increasing rate of students' misbehaviours and loss of control. The end result is the disheartening abysmal performance recorded in external examinations of these students, as students' outcome is widely and rightly adjudged to be a predictor of teachers' effectiveness and productivity (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014) in any school system. The situation therefore calls for urgent attention by all stakeholders in positions of authority school principals, parents of students, the schools board, Ministry of Education, and the government. Thus, this study sought to investigate the management of teacher's truancy for effective education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers' truancy has become a menace threatening the quality of education delivery and instructional outputs in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Truancy in this regard is a deviant behaviour that consists of teachers' withdrawal of spirited service delivery in the schools. This is expressed in outright deliberate frequent absenteeism from school; absenteeism from the classroom even when they are in school; missing the instructional time scheduling of their classes; whiling away instructional time with irrelevances; and other manifestations of emotional detachment from their job performance which defeat effective teaching and learning. The situation becomes most worrisome given the pole position occupied by teachers and their indispensable status in secondary schools administration and in the teaching-learning process.

The effects have been far-reaching on school quality assurance attempts of school principals and students have always been the worst hit by it as their learning progress gets derailed, leading to poor student achievement and high chances of students' truancy, too. School administrators are therefore confronted with the daunting task of devising effective means of managing the situation to restore sanity and order to teachers' professional conduct in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. To this end, the researcher in this study sets out to investigate the effectiveness of teachers' truancy management strategies such as attendance monitoring, and instructional supervision in tackling the challenge in a bid to improving the status and quality of teaching and learning in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to assess the management of teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Examine ways in which the use of attendance monitoring is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Determine ways in which the use of instructional supervision is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- To what extent is attendance monitoring effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To extent is the use of instructional supervision effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at .05 level of significance:

- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the ways attendance monitoring is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent instructional supervision is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Truancy is a prominent theme in discourses and studies on students' deviant behaviours in secondary schools (Echebe et al., 2020; Gbenga & Ufondu, 2022; Nicholas & Kennedy, 2018). Within this level of education, it is mostly related to students' absconding from attending school or classes against the knowledge of their parents or caregivers. In this regard, Cambridge Dictionary defined a truant as a pupil or student who stays away from school without leave or explanation. To this end, Carter cited in Sambe et al. (2015) defined truancy as a deliberate absence from school on the part of the student without the knowledge and consent of parents, for which no reasonable or acceptable excuse is given. This definition considerably broadens the concept making it synonymous with unexcused absenteeism. In the conceptualization of Collins (2020), truancy is the behaviour exhibited by a student in having been registered in a school but identified as not attending school when the law says they should. This includes absence from classes.

Truancy is a situation whereby a student is absent from school for no legitimate reason. He went further to say that many students have been guilty of truancy at least once in their academic lifetime, wherein they purposefully skipped class or did not go to school at all without permission and without excuse. This could have been because they wanted to attend a special event, or probably hang out with friends or just stay away from school. This isolated incidence (truancy) is quite typical and likely to create problems, which can lead to a varied set of negative and even more dangerous consequences (Sambe et al., 2015). In this regard, Adeyemi (2019) averred that truancy is a delinquent act, which occurs when a child often stays away from the school without good reasons.

In non-educational organizations and in employee engagements in workplaces, the concept of truancy is discussed within the scope of employee withdrawal behaviour (Mgbemena, 2022). It describes a situation where an employee intentionally or absentmindedly absents himself/herself from work engagements, either by total or partial absence from work, or by withdrawing their services and or commitment from their job duties while physically present within the organization (Hisey & Bumgardner, 2019; Mgbemena, 2022).

Teacher truancy within the scope of this present study therefore refers all manner of withdrawal behaviours exhibited by teachers either as a result of dissatisfaction with their jobs or as a result of personal gains, which Ugoani (2016) described as education corruption. These withdrawal behaviours include total absenteeism from work (which comes with different severity

rates, ranging from a few days to weeks), partial absenteeism from work (in which case they report to work but leave within working hours without permission), absenting themselves from the classroom even though they are within the school premise, whiling away instructional time while in the classroom, withdrawing commitment and efforts from their job performances, and every other form of withdrawal behaviours. It connotes teachers' physical, psychological or emotional withdrawal from their official duties. It therefore becomes obvious that all forms and manners of truancy disconnects the teacher from the path of effective education delivery and jeopardizes administrative efforts towards education goals attainment in the school.

Eder and Eisenberger (2018) conceptualized withdrawal behaviour (teachers truancy in this regard) as the actions an employee (teacher) takes when he/she becomes physically and/or psychologically disengaged from the organization. According to them, the withdrawal behaviours are in form of lateness (tardiness), absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover intentions, etc. For Kaplan et al. (2019), withdrawal behaviours (teacher truancy) are a set of attitudes and behaviours used by employees when they stay at the job but for some reasons decide to be less participative in duty engagement.

Pulic Senior Secondary Schools are administered by Principals appointed by the Schools' Board on the account of their certified qualification for such administrative roles (Victor, 2017). Their administrative functions cover the management scope of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and supervising the interaction of the educational resources (human and non-human) for the attainment of education objectives of the school (Ekundayo, 2010; Friedman, 2020; Victor, 2017). They oversee the running of the schools, assuming roles that cut across instructional leadership, students and teachers personnel services, financial management, supervision and inspection of instruction and of the school facilities, public relations, human resource management, school records keeping, students' and teachers' discipline, and all such activities that lead to the attainment of the goals and objectives of this level of education as articulated in the National Policy on Education and at individual school level (Effiong, 2015; Meenyinikor et al., 2013; Nwangwa & Barrah, 2021). The administrative roles of principals are simply far reaching, and their competence in managing the pool of professionals that make up the school system, vis-à-vis certified teachers, parents with various dimensions of experiences, expertise and qualifications and the cadre of classified personnel warrants the establishment of cordial relationship with these stakeholders and their engagement and full participation in the administration of the schools (Ekundayo, 2010; Nwangwa & Barrah, 2021).

Secondary School administration involves among other things, curriculum administration and teaching, pastoral care, discipline, assessment evaluation and examinations, resource allocation, costing and forward planning, staff appraisal, relationship with the community, use of the practical skills necessary for implementing the policies of organisation such as decision-making, negotiation, bargaining, communication, conflict handling, running meetings and so on (Ojo cited in Nwangwa & Barrah, 2021). A cursory look at all of these activities aimed at realizing the set goals and objectives of education at the secondary level clearly reveals that they cannot be done by the Principal alone without the help of other stakeholders of the school. Sagnak (2016) rightly observed that the effectiveness of a leader (the principal in this regard) can only be guaranteed through the involvement and engagement of the stakeholders of the organization (the school), as these pool of human resources available to the Principal is often so rich that neglecting them in the administrative functions of the school would no doubt lead to school underperformance and poor instructional productivity (Hanushek & Ettema, 2017).

The effectiveness of school administration depends on several factors, one of which is the

extent to which teachers work as the same vision with the Principal (Yousuf et al., 2013). The principal has critical roles to play to make this happen and one of them is that he must be able to provide appropriate leadership that clearly makes his visions and expectations known to teachers and in addition to that provide the path for them to walk towards the realization of the vision (Aslanargun, 2015; Martinez & McAbee, 2020). Guiding them through that path would also require that he calls them to order wherever they go amiss to ensure that they stay in line with expected professional codes of behaviour. As such, checkmating teachers' truant tendencies becomes a crucial duty of school administration as not doing so becomes deleterious to school goals attainment.

Effects of Teachers' Truancy on Improved Education Delivery

Every form of teachers' truancy no doubt has serious implication for the effective delivery of education in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State and anywhere else in the world. Teachers' productivity is negatively impacted to the detriment of students' learning and of administrative effectiveness. Because the teacher is a role model to students, there is a high tendency that the teacher reproduces after his kind in the students looking up to him (Ullah et al., 2021). This means that the truancy of a teacher could to a high extent bring about truancy in students. For example, Unal (2012) observed that when a teacher is absent from the classroom, it gives room to different forms of students' deviance. These include loss of classroom control, increased rate of students' fighting and bullying incidences, loss of learning facilitation, and inability to cover learning syllabus, among others. These ultimately result in poor student learning consequent upon poor academic performance of students. Nzeako (2016) also found that teachers' absenteeism increases students' absenteeism as students on knowing that their teacher would not be in school may decide to not come to school, too, or may leave the house but fail to report in school or in class, hence, students' truancy increases with cases of teachers' truancy.

Ullah et al. (2021) was more explicit in identifying the impact of teachers' truancy on students' performance through their findings. They found that teachers' truancy leads to non-completion of scheme of work, poor student learning, increased rate of examination malpractices as students become unprepared to face their exams, increased rate of violence in the classroom, irregular attendance of students, poor academic performance, retardation in students' study progress and loss of motivation to study. Sambe et al. (2015) corroborated these findings in their own study and posited that teachers' truant behaviour has negative effects on students' academic achievement due to its tendency to cause failures in terminal examinations and increase rate of dropouts.

Teachers are not only role models to students but they also represent the face of education in the community. When teachers' become truant, the community sees it and this may lead to loss of confidence in teachers and in the school system. The resultant effect of this sometimes becomes high student dropout as parents' faith in the school's ability to discipline and mould their children becomes lost. The school administrator's effectiveness also diminishes with increasing rate of truancy in schools, because teachers are the administrator's foot soldiers. When they are not on ground, achieving school goals loses feasibility.

Teachers' Truancy Management Practices and Improved Education Delivery

Managing teachers' truancy in public Senior Secondary Schools is simply not optional for school administrators and education authorities if the lofty goals and objectives of this level of education as spelt out in relevant sections of the National Policy on Education must be realized. Literature and experience support the adoption of strategies such as strict monitoring of teachers' attendance and presence in the school for the entire school hour, supervision of instruction, school inspection, improved remuneration and welfare packages of teachers, teachers' appraisal, and the employment of administrative disciplinary strategies.

Attendance monitoring as a truancy management strategy is widely adopted to checkmate teachers' lateness and absenteeism in schools. Teachers' expected resumption time in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State is 7:30am and their closure time is 2:00pm. As such, between this duration, the school has the whole of the teachers' time. Attendance monitoring requires that teachers sign in on the School Attendance Register on or before 7:30am; sign in and sign out on the Class Attendance Register when they arrive in or exit from the classroom respectively in line with the classroom timetable for every instructional period; sign out on the Teachers' Movement Log any time they are moving out of the school premise within the school time and sign in when they return; and then officially sign out of the School Attendance Register after 2:00pm the official closure time of the school. With this, school administrators could be able to monitor teachers' attendance and regulate their movement within and out of the school during the school time. This attendance register becomes a school record that could furnish school administrators with quality data about teachers' whereabouts, which could be used for informed decisions-making with respect to teachers' performance appraisal and other necessary administrative decisions-making needs.

Instructional supervision is another strategy that could prove useful in the management of teachers' truancy in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Instructional supervision involves overseeing the teaching and learning process to ensure that teachers teach appropriately and that learner's learn as expected. It is to preserve the integrity of instruction and to improve quality of teaching and learning. As such, it is an instructional quality assurance practice.

One of the practices of instructional supervision that could prove effective in teachers' truancy management is classroom visitation and observation. This involves the principal or a delegated senior and experienced committed teacher visiting the instructional session of teachers and students in the classroom to observe how teachers teach and how they manage their allotted time and to also observe how students learn in a bid to correcting any observed ineffectiveness factors in the teaching-learning process. This practice possess the potential of ameliorating the problem of truancy in that a teacher who has the intention of truanting will surely call himself to order when he is aware that he is being observed or monitored by the principal. Besides, any observed form of truancy in the teachers' behaviour could then be easily addressed by the school administrator after the visitation and observation exercise. It is noteworthy too that the more classroom visitation is frequently carried out by the principal, the higher the chances of instructional truancy being reduced to the barest minimum level in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Attendance Monitoring and Teachers' Truancy Management for Improved Education Delivery

Absenteeism is one of the most manifest expressions of teachers' truancy in schools. Raja and Gupta (2019) had defined absenteeism as workers' absence from their fixed work because of several reasons. This could be by a teacher absenting himself from school or from the classroom while present in school without prior notice and approval from the relevant authority – the principal. When it comes to truancy, the reason for the teacher's absence is usually unjustifiable, accounting for why they do not approach principals for permission, or why principals fail to grant them leave for absence. As such, truant absenteeism, which according to Raja and Gupta (2019) is an unplanned and unapproved absenteeism of a teacher, is outrightly a deviant behaviour that needs to be controlled.

The need to monitor teachers' attendance to school and to classes arises partly from McGregor's theory X philosophy that teachers are naturally loathing work and would absent themselves from work at any slightest opportunity and for self-seeking reasons (Keerthana & Babu, 2018). Effective delivery of education begins teachers' availability on duty. Availability in this regard encompasses both attendance and punctuality. As such, the use of attendance register to monitor teachers' attendance performance becomes a tool for managing teachers' truancy even as Ndifon and Cornelius-Ukpepi (2014) observed that monitoring teachers' attendance through the use of attendance registers serves as a form of extrinsic motivation to teachers, causing them to be on duty as and when due.

Attendance at work comes from the word Latin "assiduatem" meaning "continual presence". It has as synonyms words as industriousness; sedulity; perseverance. At workplace it is tantamount to due diligence which is necessary amount of diligence required in a professional activity to avoid being negligent. Teachers' attendance is a useful performance tool in the school system (Thierry, 2020). For instance if a teacher is consistently showing up late, leaving early, or taking an unusual number of sick days, they are likely not showing their full potential. Poor attendance most often can be caused by a series of factors including: a lack of motivation; health issues, or burnout. It must be noted that absenteeism can put extra pressure on other team school staff who have to make up for missing coworkers. Besides this is the problem of students not being able to cover what they should cover in the academic syllable and the wasted time periods in the lives of the students in the moments that their absent teachers are supposed to be in class with them, in addition to the vices that such students engage in during such idle periods.

Monitoring teachers' attendance is beyond just ensuring that they are present in school. Teachers' presence in school must be assured for the whole school time, and as such, monitoring their attendance requires monitoring when they arrive in school and in classes and monitoring when they leave. Teachers must be punctual and must not be in a hurry to leave the school before the closing time, neither must they be wanting at their duty post. Punctuality aims at ensuring that teachers attend school daily and also complete their working hours (Engle in Thierry, 2020). Punctual teachers are valuable assets to any school that wants to be performant. Teachers who do not respect punctuality constitute severe burdens on the system and do not contribute much to the overall productivity of the school. Some authors (White in Thierry, 2020; Edwards in Thierry, 2020) believe that a man's intellectual or moral character can be measured with his capacity to keep appointment. To this regard, Thierry (2020) saw punctuality as a key condition to succeed in life. The advantages of punctuality at work are numerous and include: respect of others; helps establish strong work ethics and enhance productivity, credibility and professionalism. Punctuality also help teachers to be better organized and better composed for the activities of the day. Punctual teachers are never in a hurry trying to catch up lost time. Hence, the attendance register has a way of boosting teacher performance with respect to punctuality.

Teachers' attendance is monitored basically by the use of three major timebooks in the school, which include the attendance register, the movement logbook and the class attendance register or the instructional attendance register (Wali, 2021). The attendance register monitors both attendance and punctuality. It is often kept by the Principal's office or at a designated office and teachers are expected to login at arrival, indicating their arrival time. At the close of work, they are also expected to logout while leaving. The attendance register is "opened" at the beginning of each school day with the date clearly specified and teachers write their names and time of arrival. Once it is 7:30am the register is "closed" by the Principal or attendant ruling a red line under the last arrival. Any teacher coming after that time still writes their name and time of arrival but is adjudged late for the day. The movement logbook in similar manner is used to monitor teachers' movement out from and into the school within the working hours. A teacher going out of the school is expected to logout, indicating the time he left the school premises, and on return, he is expected to login. This helps the school management to keep track of teachers' whereabouts within the working time of each day and may thus be able to account for teachers in the case of any eventualities. The instructional attendance register is moreover kept with the class prefect of each class and every teacher is expected to sign in and out on arrival to class for teaching and on exit from the class after teaching, or simply indicating when they arrived and when they exited.

These attendance monitoring registers are part of the school records required by the management for decision making (Amanchukwu & Ololube, 2015). In occasions where principals are too occupied with other office duties to notice teachers' performance with respect to attendance in the school, the record becomes a hand tool for him. Teachers with impressive attendance records may be duly acknowledge in due times while those found wanting may be cautioned and if their truant tendencies persist, query and other forms of disciplinary measures may be taken against them. The knowledge of the implication of having poor attendance records may therefore serve as deterrent to teachers against truancy.

Instructional Supervision and Teachers' Truancy Management for Improved Education Delivery

Instructional supervisory practices of principals, which are practices that aim at assuring quality in the instructional delivery process, are viable tools for managing teachers' truancy problems in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. These are tentatively considered viable due to their proven efficacy at tackling teachers' classroom and personality challenges which undermine the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Ashun & Acquah, 2021). It is a quality control mechanism in the instructional delivery process (Instruction refers to teaching and learning and supervision in literal terms is the process whereby a superior and more experienced person oversees the performance of an activity by someone who is lower or less experienced. As such, instructional supervision is the process whereby a more experienced other (who could either be the principal or a senior teacher) supervises the teaching-learning process in the classroom to ensure that teachers and learners teach and learn appropriately in a bid to assuring the wholeness of the process so that the right results are achieved (Ekundayo, 2013). This is done by the instructional supervisor establishing a democratic, collegial relationship with the teacher with the sole aim of helping the teacher get his job performance right, and helping the students to learn aright, too (Ozor, 2021; Ekundayo, 2013; Usman, 2015).

Instructional supervision is implemented through different practices, but significantly, the

supervisor avails himself in the instructional venue (classroom) to watch and monitor what teachers teach and how they teach. Because of the supervisor's presence in the classroom, the teacher becomes conscious of what he does and comports himself in a manner that is befitting of the instructional delivery process (Hiliya et al., 2022). Iloh et al. (2016) listed the variety of instructional supervision practices to include: classroom visitation/observation, inter/intra school, team teaching practices, workshops, demonstration, clinical supervision and micro-teaching among others. Sule et al. (2015) in his identification of the instructional supervision activities by the school head, listed checking of teachers' lesson notes, scheme of work, pupils' notes, teachers' punctuality, teachers' regularity in class, classroom observation, demonstration, conferencing, workshop, micro-teaching, moderation of examination question papers and moderation of marking schemes among others. It thus becomes clearer to see why instructional supervision may be a tool to managing teachers' truancy in the classroom. Sule et al. (2015) however pointed out that the supervisor must have supervisory capacity to enforce the task of instructional supervision and to also encourage the teachers to utilize their talents when necessary so that at the end, instruction and instructional procedures can be improved.

A primary practice in instructional supervision is classroom visitation. Classroom visitation or observation is a supervisory technique in which the principals visit the classroom and observe teachers delivery of the instruction taking account of their mastery of the subject matter, application of teaching strategies and aids, classroom management and organization among others (Chidi & Victor, 2017). Similar to this, Iloh et al (2016) pointed out that classroom observation involves practicality in real classroom situation, whereby the supervisee, presents what he or she had prepared for his or her lesson, utilizing various teaching methodologies, instructional materials, interacting with the learners, jotting salient points on the instructional board, assessing the students using both formative and summative evaluations, coordinating class activities, while the supervisor (principal) inspects, observes and evaluates what and how the instructor has performed. On the course of the classroom visitation, the supervisor ensures to check some professional documents such as attendance register, teachers' lesson plan or notes, mark books, students' cumulative books, etc. (Ozor, 2021). Alimi and Akinfolarin (2012) revealed that checking students' notes, teachers' punctuality and attendance, examination questions and marking scheme significantly impacts on teachers' job and students' academic performance during classroom observation. This is relatable because a teacher would naturally want to give his best when he knows he is being monitored by a superior. As such, the tendency for instructional supervision to bring about proper teacher conduct and to checkmate truancy becomes really high.

It is also important bear in mind that the classroom observation activity is not aimed at finding faults with the teacher in the classroom, but is a platform for principals to involve teachers in the process of improving upon their shortcomings (Umaru, 2018). The classroom visitation and observation is followed by the supervisor providing feedback to the teacher, which serves as professional guidance to help him improve on his instructional delivery. Truant behaviours are also pointed out and addressed. Any unintentional deficiency of the teacher observed during instructional supervision could then be handled using workshop supervisory technique, in which the teacher and supervisor meet, dialogue, discuss and share ideas about more effective ways to act in the classroom for effective education delivery.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive survey research design, which is used to identify and describe variables within a given population at the time of the study. This design was deemed appropriate as it facilitated the identification and description of effective strategies for managing teachers' truancy to enhance instructional delivery. Additionally, it helped determine how these strategies could be applied in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

The study population comprised all 302 principals of public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, including 54 urban principals and 248 rural principals, as defined in the study. This data was sourced from the Research and Statistics Department of the Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board (2022). Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State were selected for two primary reasons: first, due to frequent reports of teachers' truancy in these schools, and second, because of the limited research available on this topic within the geographical and subject scope of the study.

A census sampling technique was adopted to include the entire population in the study. Consequently, the sample size consisted of all 302 principals (54 urban and 248 rural) of public Senior Secondary Schools in the state. This sampling technique was chosen because the population size was considered manageable.

Data collection was carried out using a researcher-designed questionnaire titled *Management of Teachers' Truancy for Improved Education Delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State Questionnaire (MTTIEDPSSRSQ)*. The questionnaire was divided into two sections:

- **Section A:** Collected demographic information about the participants.
- **Section B:** Contained 10 items grouped into clusters based on the study's research questions.

Responses were structured using a modified four-point Likert scale:

- Strongly Agree (SA) – 4
- Agree (A) – 3
- Disagree (D) – 2
- Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1

The questionnaire underwent both face and content validation by three experts. Face validation ensured that the instrument was well-structured, free from errors, and visually appropriate for respondents. Content validation confirmed that the questionnaire items were relevant and accurately measured the intended variables, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the study's content scope. Their feedback was incorporated before final copies were printed and distributed for data collection.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered to twenty respondents within the study area who were not part of the main sample. These were completed and retrieved twice, with a two-week interval between the first and second administration. The responses were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, yielding a reliability coefficient of .720, which was considered sufficiently high for the study.

The researcher, with the assistance of three trained research assistants, personally distributed the questionnaires to facilitate timely distribution and retrieval. Respondents were

given one week to complete the questionnaire before the research team returned for collection. Out of the 302 distributed questionnaires, 278 were successfully retrieved, representing a 92% response rate.

The research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, with a criterion mean of 2.50 (for the four-point Likert scale). Hypotheses were tested using an independent samples t-test at a .05 significance level.

RESULTS

Analysis of Respondents' Demographic Data

Table 1a: Respondents' demographic statistics (Status)

Respondents' portfolio	Sample size	Utilized sample	Percentage utilized (Return Rate)
Urban principals	54	48	89%
Rural Principals	248	230	93%
Total	302	278	92%

Table 1b: Respondents' demographic statistics (Years of Experience)

Years of experience	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
0-5 years	36	13%	13%
6-10 years	84	30%	43%
11-15 years	99	36%	79%
16-20 years	42	15%	94%
Above 20 years	17	6%	100%
Total	278	100%	

Table 1a shows the demographic statistics of the respondents. It shows the status of the respondents, reveals that a total of 302 principals comprising of 54 urban principals and 248 rural principals were sampled. Out of the copies of the questionnaire that were successfully retrieved, only 278 were found worthy to be utilized for the analysis, which shows a return rate of 92%.

Table 1b on the other hand shows the years of experience of the participants. The table reveals that 36 respondents (13%) had been principals for 0-5 years; 84 (30%) had been principals for 6-10 years; 99 (36%) had been principals for 11-15 years; 42 (15%) had been principals for 16-20 years; and 17 (6%) of the respondents had been principals for over 20 years. This information reveals that a very high percentage of the respondents had worked as principals to a reasonably long period of time. As such, they would have gathered wealth of experience on the job which could have made their responses to the questionnaire items very reliable.

Answers to the Research Questions

Research Question One: To what extent is attendance monitoring effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

Table 2 shows the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent attendance monitoring is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Five items (Item 1 - 5) were examined against a criterion mean of 2.50. As shown in the table, all the items each had a mean score greater than the criterion mean, implying that both the urban and the rural principals agreed that each of the items was effective to high extent in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The items include: Teachers' movement in and out of school is closely monitored by designated staff to reduce teachers' truancy ($3.71 \pm .469$); Signing of attendance register is compulsory for all staff for effective monitoring ($3.76 \pm .439$); There are sanctions for not signing attendance registers to manage teachers' truancy ($3.75 \pm .435$); There is regular reminder to staff about attendance monitoring for managing truancy ($3.65 \pm .555$); and There are incentives for staff with optimal attendance records to manage staff truancy ($3.69 \pm .478$). The grand mean for the cluster was found to be 3.71 with a standard deviation of .475, which is greater than the criterion mean. This means that majority of the urban and rural principals agreed to a high extent that attendance monitoring is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent is instructional supervision effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent instructional supervision is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Five items (Item 6–10) were analyzed against a criterion mean of 2.50. The table reveals that each item has a mean score that is greater than the criterion mean, which implies that majority of the urban and rural principals agreed to a high extent that instructional supervision is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The items and their overall mean and standard deviation scores are: The practice of classroom visitation reduces teachers' chances of missing classes to curb teachers' truancy ($3.67 \pm .548$); Instructional supervision makes teachers conscious of what they do in class, thus minimizing truant behaviours ($3.69 \pm .469$); Classroom inspection makes teachers concentrate and not give in to distractions that cause teachers' truancy ($3.55 \pm .545$); When supervisors are in class, both teachers and students take the teaching and learning more seriously and that reduces teachers' truancy ($3.65 \pm .554$); and Teachers' attachment to their students and to the instructional delivery process is enhanced through instructional supervision to curb teachers' truancy ($3.67 \pm .473$). The overall grand mean and standard deviation scores were found to be $3.67 \pm .518$, which implies that instructional supervision is to a high extent effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Table 2: Mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent attendance monitoring is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Urban Principals		Rural Principals		Average		Decision
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	$\bar{X}\bar{X}$	SD	
1.	Teachers' movement in and out of school is closely monitored by designated staff to reduce teachers' truancy.	3.79	.410	3.70	.480	3.71	.469	High Extent
2.	Signing of attendance register is compulsory for all staff for effective monitoring.	3.77	.425	3.75	.443	3.76	.439	High Extent
3.	There are sanctions for not signing attendance registers to manage teachers' truancy.	3.79	.410	3.74	.440	3.75	.435	High Extent
4.	There is regular reminder to staff about attendance monitoring for managing truancy.	3.69	.552	3.64	.557	3.65	.555	High Extent
5.	There are incentives for staff with optimal attendance records to manage staff truancy.	3.69	.468	3.69	.481	3.69	.478	High Extent
Grand Mean		3.75	.453	3.72	.800	3.71	.475	High Extent

Table 3: Mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent instructional supervision is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Urban Principals		Rural Principals		Average		Decision
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	$\bar{X}\bar{X}$	SD	
6	The practice of classroom visitation reduces teachers' chances of missing classes to curb teachers' truancy.	3.65	.565	3.68	.546	3.67	.548	High Extent
7	Instructional supervision makes teachers conscious of what they do in class, thus minimizing truant behaviours.	3.69	.468	3.70	.471	3.69	.469	High Extent
8	Classroom inspection makes teachers concentrate and not give in to distractions that cause teachers' truancy.	3.65	.565	3.67	.542	3.66	.545	High Extent
9	When supervisors are in class, both teachers and students take the teaching and learning more seriously and that reduces teachers' truancy.	3.65	.565	3.65	.554	3.65	.554	High Extent
10	Teachers' attachment to their students and to the instructional delivery process is enhanced through instructional supervision to curb teachers' truancy.	3.69	.468	3.66	.474	3.67	.473	High Extent
Grand Mean		3.67	.523	3.67	.517	3.67	.518	High Extent

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent attendance monitoring is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Table 3: Independent samples t-test of the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent attendance monitoring is effective in managing teachers' truancy

Attendance Monitoring		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
		48	3.7458	.31620	.04564			
		230	3.7035	.33629	.02217			
		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	t-test for Equality of Means Mean Diff	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Attendance Monitoring	Equal variances assumed	.802	276	.423	.04236	.05283	-.06165	.14637
	Equal variances not assumed	.835	70.996	.407	.04236	.05074	-.05882	.14353

Table 3 shows the output of the independent samples t-test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent attendance monitoring is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The table contains the group statistics indicating the number of respondents, the mean, standard deviation and the standard error of each group, and also contains the independent samples test output values. The results indicate that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of urban principals ($M=3.7458$, $SD=.31260$) and that of rural principals ($M=3.7035$, $SD=.33629$), $[t(276) = .802, p = .423 > .05]$. The 95% confidence interval of the difference between means for equal variance assumed ranged from $[-.06165$ to $.14637]$ and did not indicate a difference between the means of the sample. As such, the null hypothesis is upheld.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent instructional supervision is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: Independent samples t-test of the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent instructional supervision is effective in managing teachers' truancy

Instructional Supervision		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
		48	3.6625	.35046	.05058			
		230	3.6704	.33447	.02205			
		T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	t-test for Equality of Means Mean Diff	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Instructional Supervision	Equal variances assumed	-.148	276	.882	-.00793	.05352	-.11329	.09742
	Equal variances not assumed	-.144	66.077	.886	-.00793	.05518	-.11811	.10224

Table 4 shows the output of the independent samples t-test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of urban and rural principals on the extent instructional supervision is effective in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The group statistics and the independent samples test output values are rightly tabulated. The results indicate that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of urban principals ($M=3.6625$, $SD=.35046$) and that of rural principals ($M=3.6704$, $SD=.33447$), $[t(276) = -.148, p = .882 > .05]$. The 95% confidence interval of the difference between means for equal variance assumed ranged from $[-.11329$ to $.09742]$ and did not indicate a difference between the means of the sample. As such, the null hypothesis is upheld.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Attendance Monitoring Registers in Managing Teachers' Truancy for Improved Education Delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

The study in this regard revealed that the use of attendance registers is effective to a high extent in managing teachers' truancy for quality education delivery. It further revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of urban and rural principals in this regard, which imply that majority of principals from the urban schools and those from the rural schools shared similar opinion regarding the extent of effectiveness of the use of attendance registers for the purpose of managing teachers' truancy. These findings are in line with that of Mwihaki et al. (2019) who investigated principals' role in promoting teachers' regularity and punctuality through attendance monitoring and found a strong correlation between the variables. He concluded that teachers' attendance monitoring through the use of attendance registers improved teachers' attendance and punctuality and regulated their movement in and out of school within school hours. The findings of the study also concur with the position of Amanchukwu and Ololube (2015) that attendance monitoring registers are useful for administrative decision making processes in the school, and that the attendance records serve as handy tools for principals in situations where they are too busy with administrative engagements which make it difficult for them to be physically present to monitor teachers' attendance.

Wali (2021) had also posited that attendance monitoring in schools is carried out with the help of three timebooks, vis-à-vis the attendance register, which monitors attendance and punctuality, the movement logbook, which monitors the movement of teachers in and out of school during school hours, and the class attendance register or the instructional attendance register, and monitors teachers' attendance to class. The findings of the study therefore validate the use of these time books as they were adjudged by the respondents to be highly effective in controlling teachers' deviance with respect to absconding from their duty posts.

Instructional Supervision in Managing Teachers' Truancy for Improved Education Delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

The study also sought to investigate how effective instructional supervision is in managing teachers' truancy for improved education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The analysis of the participants' responses showed that instructional supervision is

effective to a high extent at achieving this intended goal, and majority of principals from urban and rural secondary schools shared this view, too. These findings corroborate the position of Nwankwoala (2021) who posited that instructional supervision is significantly implemented by the supervisor availing himself in the classroom to watch and monitor what teachers teach and how they teach. Because of the supervisor's presence in the classroom, Hiliya et al. (2022) asserted that teachers become conscious of what they do and comport themselves in a manner that is befitting of the instructional delivery process.

In the same vein, the finding of the study concurs with the findings of Ozor (2021), who on investigating the role of instructional supervision on teachers' effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State found that instructional supervision was a veritable tool for ensuring that teachers do their jobs judiciously in the classroom. This finding was observed to be a general trend across schools in both rural and urban settings, and as such, it reinforces the validity of the finding of this present study. This finding is therefore very instructional for principals of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State as it highlights the need for them to be up and doing in supervising teaching and learning in their schools and not to be too preoccupied with office duties, thereby neglecting what actually goes on in the classroom. Teachers' instructional truancy will surely be reduced when principals are effective in supervising instruction in public senior secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

Senior Secondary Schools have quality instructional delivery as a critical goal which can only be achieved through the efforts of teachers who are completely sold out to their duties through unflinching commitment and dedication to their jobs. Already, teachers are acknowledged as the most valued assets of any level of education as the delivery of education cannot be achieved without them. Several factors have been found to undermine teachers' effectiveness to the detriment of improved education delivery goals, and one of them which became the sole concern of this study is teachers' truancy. This describes a situation where teachers lose attachment to their jobs either through total absenteeism from school or classroom, or by being emotionally absent from the instructional delivery process. Any principal who must succeed in the role of school administration must therefore be able to devise strategies of managing this behavioural deviance of teachers, and from this study, strategies such as the use of attendance monitoring systems and supervision of instruction are found to be effective tools for managing teachers' truancy. These truancy management strategies are found to be effective for both urban and rural public senior secondary schools in the state and their employment by Principals have the potential to pitch these schools at new heights of improved education delivery in the state.

Recommendations

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

- Principals of public Senior Secondary Schools should take attendance records of teachers very seriously and should not spare teachers who are found wanting in school and classroom attendance, so that it would always serve as deterrent to other teachers.

- The government should install CCTV cameras in classes and equip schools with necessary facilities to monitor how teachers use their instructional periods in classrooms. This will checkmate instructional truancy of teachers and ensure that teachers optimize their instructional periods.
- Principals should normalize instructional supervisory practices such as classroom visitation, conferences with teachers, inspection of teachers' lesson notes, coaching of teachers, among others, to reduce chances of teachers' truancy and to help teachers make the most out of their times in the classroom.

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