



Clinical & Counselling Psychology Review (CCPR)

Volume No. 1, Issue No. 2, Fall 2019

ISSN(P): 2412-5253 ISSN(E): 2706-8676

Homepage: <https://icp.umt.edu.pk/ccpr/home.aspx>

Article: **Truancy among Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study**

Author(s): **Amina Arshad**
Syeda Salma Hasan

Online Published: Spring 2019

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/ccpr.12.03>

Article QR Code:



Amina Arshad

To Cite Article:

Arshad, A., & Hasan, S. S. (2019). Truancy among undergraduate students: An exploratory study. *Clinical & Counselling Psychology Review*, 1(1), 35–47.

[Crossref](#)



A publication of the
Institute of Clinical Psychology
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan.

Truancy among Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study

Amina Arshad¹
Syeda Salma Hasan^{2*}

Abstract

The study was conducted to investigate the opinion of truants about their teachers, their academic achievement and their reasons for skipping classes. It also investigated gender differences among truants in terms of their opinion about their teachers. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 30 truants with an equal number of boys and girls. Truants were identified by their respective teachers. The Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (1965) form C was used to measure the opinion of truants about their teachers. One sample t test was used to analyze the data. The results indicated that truants carry a bad opinion about their teachers. They also indicated that truants have an average academic achievement. However, the study indicated no significant gender differences among truants in terms of their opinion about their teachers. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the teachers' boring teaching style is the most frequently reported reason for skipping classes. Truants need counseling to change their perceptions regarding their teachers' attitude as they believe that teachers exercise their authority too much and they give a hard time to students. The study can be beneficial for teachers, parents and educationists as it highlights the reasons behind truancy, opinions of truants about their teachers, their academic achievements and the need for counseling to modify their perceptions about their teachers.

Keywords: academic achievement, reasons, teachers and undergraduates, truancy

Introduction

Truancy among school students captured the attention of researchers in the West and their findings have unveiled the causes of truancy and have also highlighted the need for counseling the truant students to stimulate them for achieving academic proficiency (Bartholomew, 2006; Baier, 2016; Eremie, 2015). It has been observed that in Pakistani educational context truant behavior is exhibited by school and university students. It is

^{1,2}Department of Psychology, Government College University, Lahore

*Corresponding author: salmahasan@hotmail.com

important to understand what truant behavior is and how it is defined. Truancy refers to the phenomenon described as “if a student is absent without an excuse by the parent/guardian or if the student leaves school or a class without permission of the teacher or administrator in charge, it will be considered to be an unexcused absence and the student shall be considered truant” (Seeley, [2006](#), p.2). The term “truancy” is applied to students who skip classes and are required to attend their classes. Truants skip one or two classes in a day and attend the rest of the scheduled classes (Seeley, [2006](#)).

In the past, many studies have been carried out to investigate the causes of truancy. The causes of truancy can be the student himself or herself, his/her family, school and community. For instance, students may remain absent from their schools due to school phobia, have problems in learning, or they face difficulty in interaction with other students and teachers. Another cause of truancy can be chaotic families. These students live in chaotic families or their parents are not skillful enough to force their children to go to school; this results in absence from school. Teaching methods are considered as one of the most important reasons for truant behavior. When students perceive the methods of teaching as boring, they bunk their classes (Eastman, Cooney, Connor & Small, [2007](#)). Similarly, Wadesango and Machingambi’s study based on Asian universities indicated that absenteeism is the result of the lack of interest in subject, poor teaching methods used by teachers, lack of favorable learning environment, too-much involvement in social activities, peer attraction, part-time jobs, and poor relations with the lecturers ([2011](#)). This study also indicated that there is an inverse relationship between student absenteeism and course performance, which means that the more a student is absent in a course, the less will be the performance of that student in that particular course. Baier ([2016](#)) revealed that bullying by teacher, friends and poor school performance puts school students at the risk of truancy.

To reduce truancy among students, teachers should provide motivational cues to them (Gage & Berliner, [1984](#)). Many other studies have also indicated that truant behavior occurs in students due to the fact that they do not like the teaching methods of their teachers or teachers do

not appreciate their performance. When students find difficulty in interacting with their teacher or their teacher insults them in front of other students than they become reluctant to attend their classes (Bartholomew, [2006](#)).

Truancy eventually results in low academic achievement and teenage truants show very poor academic performance (Miller & Plant, [1999](#)). Truants' academic achievements are low because they remain absent from their classes, hence they have very limited opportunities to learn. The absenteeism of students makes them a failure and causes them to drop out. Moreover, this behavior of students also indulges them in criminal activities, makes their life unstable and they are unable to follow clear career paths. As a consequence, these types of students face unemployment situations and have low earnings in their professional life (Eastman et al., [2007](#)). Another study by Bosworth ([1994](#)) indicated unfavorable attitude of truants' towards education and their academic performance remained low as compared to other students. An indigenous research by Suleman, Hussain and Kayani ([2017](#)) highlighted the lack of parental encouragement for learning, ineffective curriculum and instructional process, harsh attitude of teachers, ineffective teaching methods and bad peer company as the reasons behind truancy.

Interestingly, some studies have also addressed gender differences among truants in terms of their behavior. Joseph ([2008](#)) reported no significant gender differences in terms of referral to truancy assessment and service centers. Similarly, gender bias towards male students was reported as the least causing factor behind truancy (Ishak & Fin, [2013](#)).

In the light of the literature discussed, we can say that truancy is a very challenging task for educationists. Stimulating learning environment, transactional teaching methods and monitoring peer activities can reduce truancy among our students.

2. Rationale of the Study

A lot of work has been done in the West on truancy but still literature on this subject is scarce with reference to the Pakistani cultural context. Therefore, there is a need to address this issue which has been a matter of concern for academia in the recent decades. The current study will provide

a better insight into truancy with reference to the Pakistani educational context. It will reveal why students skip their classes. In order to reduce truant behavior, as the related literature has also emphasized, there is a dire need to provide counseling to truants in order to reduce truancy. This study will also indicate the attitude of truants towards their teachers and their academic profile. There is a need to provide useful guidelines to the parents of truants, their teachers and especially to truants themselves about the drawbacks of truancy.

3. Objectives

- To investigate the reasons behind truancy.
- To investigate the opinion of truants about their teachers.
- To investigate the academic performance of truants.
- To find out gender differences among truants in terms of their opinion about their teachers.
- To identify the areas where we need to provide counseling to truants to modify their perceptions about their teachers.

4. Hypotheses

Following hypotheses are formulated for this research.

- Truants have a bad opinion towards their teachers.
- Truant boys and girls differ in terms of their opinion about their teachers.
- Truants show poor academic performance.

5. Method

5.1 Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 30 under graduate truants with an equal number of boys and girls (15 girls and 15 boys). Truants of BS Hons (final year) were identified by their teachers. The age range of truants was 19-22 years with mean age 21.27 years and standard deviation 1.172. The GPA range of truants was 2.00-3.10 with mean GPA 2.67. The number of classes bunked in a week ranged between 5-15 classes.

5.2 Research Instruments

5.2.1. Demographic information. Included gender, age and class and an open ended question was also posed to truants to list the reasons for skipping their classes.

5.2.2. Survey of study habits and attitudes (SSHA-college level) form C. The sub-scale of SSHA “teacher approval” was used in this study. It consists of 25 items. Responses were recorded on a 5 point scale with the options “Rarely, Sometimes, Frequently, Generally and Almost Always”. This scale measures students’ opinion about their teacher’s attitude, behavior and teaching styles. The reported reliability of the sub-scale is .87 to .89 and the reliability of the sub-scale using our data is .75. The counseling key of SSHA scale was used for the identification of areas in which truants need counseling.

5.2.3. Academic achievement: Academic achievement was measured by obtaining their GPA of 3rd year.

5.2.4. Procedure. A purposive sample of 30 undergraduate truants was drawn from one public university in Lahore. Truant students were identified by their teachers. Open ended questions were asked to investigate the reasons behind their truant behavior. “Teacher Approval” subscale of the survey of study habits and attitudes was administered for measuring the opinion of truants’ about their teachers. Scoring was done with the help of stencil key. Counseling key was used for the identification of the areas in which truants need counseling.

6. Results

The study was conducted to investigate the opinion of truants about their teachers and also the reasons for skipping their classes. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the reasons behind truancy. One sample t-test was used to interpret the opinion of truants about their teachers and their academic achievement. Independent sample t-test was used to analyze gender differences among truants in terms of their opinion about their teachers.

Table 1
Reasons given by Male and Female Truants for Skipping University Classes

Reasons for bunking the classes	Males f %	Females f%	Total f%
Peer Pressure	5 (33.33%)	5 (33.33%)	10 (66.66%)
Boring Teaching Style	5 (33.33%)	6 (40%)	11 (73.33%)
Hectic Time Table	3 (20%)	2 (13.33%)	5 (33.33%)
Family Responsibilities	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)	4 (26.66 %)

Table 2
One Sample t test Analysis Indicating the Opinion of Truants' about their Teachers

Truants	M	SD	t
Teacher's Approval	20.93	8.333	13.75*

* $P = <.001$

Truants' have bad opinion about their teachers. The mean value is 20.93 which is less than standardized mean of the scale 29.0, which indicates that truants carry a poor opinion about their teachers.

Table 3
No Gender Differences in the Opinions of Male and Female Truants about their Teachers

Teacher Approval	M	SD	t
Boys	20.53	7.180	.259 ^{ns}
Girls	21.33	9.589	

$df = 29, p = ns$

Table 4
Frequency and Percentage of Truants Who need Counseling Regarding the Following Items

Items	f %
“I feel that teachers lack understanding of the needs and interests of students”.	11 (37%)
“My teachers succeed in making their subjects interesting and meaningful for me.”	15 (50%)
“I feel that teachers allow their personal like or dislike for a student to influence his/her grading unduly”.	08 (27%)
“I believe that the easiest way to get good grades is to agree with everything your teachers say”.	06 (20%)
“I think that teachers like to exercise their authority too much”.	18 (60%)
“I feel that teachers are too rigid and narrow minded”.	07 (25%)
“I think that teachers expect students to do too much study outside the class”.	10 (33%)
“When explaining a lesson or answering questions, my teachers use words that I do not understand”.	03 (10%)
“My teachers fail to give sufficient explanation of the materials they are trying to teach”.	05 (17%)
“I feel that teachers are overbearing and conceited in their relations with students”.	02 (7%)

“I believe that teachers secretly enjoy giving their students a hard time.”	12 (40%)
“I think that teachers tend to talk too much”.	04 (16%)
“I feel that teachers try to distribute their attention and assistance equally among all their students”.	13 (43%)
“The illustrations, examples, and explanations given by my teachers are too dry and technical”.	10 (33%)
“I feel that teachers tend to be sarcastic towards their poorer students and ridicule their mistakes excessively”.	08 (27%)
“I feel that teachers make their courses too difficult for the average student”.	01 (03%)
“I think that football coaches contribute more to school life than do the teachers”.	05 (17%)
“I feel that teachers think too much about grades and lose sight of the real objectives of education”.	05 (17%)
“I think that students who ask questions and offer comments in class are only trying to impress the teacher”.	05 (17%)
“I believe that teachers intentionally schedule tests on the days following important athletic or social activities”.	06 (20%)
“I believe that one way to get good grades is using flattery on your teachers”.	11 (37%)
“I feel that it is almost impossible for	

the average student to do all of his assigned homework”.	02 (7%)
“I feel that the ridiculous assignments given by teachers are the main reason for student cheating”.	04 (13%)
“I feel that students cannot be expected to be like most teachers”.	15 (60%)
“I believe that teachers enter their profession mainly because they enjoy teaching”.	07 (23%)

Table 5
One Sample t test Analysis on Truants’ Academic Achievement

Traunt’s academic achievement	M	SD	t
GPA	2.67	.332	44.05*

* $P = <.001$

Mean value of GPA is 2.7 which shows that truants have average academic achievement level.

7. Discussion

The study investigated the reasons behind truancy, truants’ opinion about their teachers, and their academic performance. The study indicated that truants reported boring teaching styles followed by peer pressure, hectic time table and family responsibilities as the most important reasons for their truant behavior. The findings strongly support the previous studies which have indicated that poor teaching methods, peer attraction, and unfavorable learning environment are the chief causes of truancy among students (Eastman et al., [2007](#); Wadesango & Machingambi, [2011](#); Baier, [2016](#); Suleman et al., [2017](#)).

The study supports the hypothesis that truants carry a bad opinion about their teachers. On the basis of our findings, we can infer that truants believe that teachers are authoritarian, do not practice effective teaching methods and their personal likes and dislikes influence students' grades. Teachers give a hard time to students and are sarcastic towards them. This study supports the findings of Bartholomew which reported that boring teaching styles, lack of appreciation by teachers and their insulting behavior towards students make the students reluctant to attend the classes. The findings are also in line with an indigenous study which highlighted that discriminatory and harsh attitude of teachers, incompetent and non-punctual teachers and an ineffective teaching style cause truant behavior among secondary school students (2006).

Moreover, the findings indicate no significant gender differences among truants in terms of their opinion about their teachers. We can say that both genders carry poor opinion about the efficacy of their teachers. The study also indicates that truant students need professional counseling to change their thinking and opinions about their teachers as they believe that teachers exercise too much authority, they expect too much from their students, they do not succeed in making their classes meaningful and they enjoy giving a hard time to students. These findings support the findings of Eremie (2015) which indicated that hostile and unfriendly attitude of teachers and fear of school and teachers are the underlying reasons behind truancy. This study also emphasized that students need counseling to build up better perceptions of their teachers. Furthermore, teachers need to be educated about the causes associated with truant behavior.

Findings, however, do not support the hypothesis that truants have poor academic achievement. The findings indicate that the mean value of the GPA of truants is 2.7 which is an average performance according to the set standards of the university. The findings partially support that the number of absences are inversely related with course performance (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011). On the other hand, the study supports Bosworth (1994) which indicated that truants have an unfavorable attitude towards education and their academic performance remains low as compared to other students. Furthermore, this study has identified that truants perceive that teachers exercise too much authority

and they are less likely to perceive that teachers make the subject meaningful and interesting; hence, their cognizance of their teachers indicates that they are in dire need of counseling.

8. Conclusion and Implications

The study helps us to conclude that truants carry a bad opinion about their teachers and are average academic achievers. The study also reveals that boring teaching style, peer pressure, hectic time table and family responsibilities are causes of their truant behavior. The study suggests that truants need to seek professional counseling to change their cognizance of their teachers and the educational system. It also highlights that teachers need to be educated about the factors which are promoting truancy among students. The study can be beneficial for educationists, students and teachers since it addresses the significant issue of truancy among students.

References

- Baier, D. (2016). The school as an influencing factor of truancy. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 5, 91–202.
- Bosworth, D. (1994). Truancy and pupil performance. *Education Economics*, 2(3), 243–264.
- Bartholomew, R. E. (2006). *Teaching, truancy and rational choice* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Buckingham, UK.
- Eastman, G., Cooney, S., Connor, C., & Small, S. (2007). *Finding effective solutions to truancy: What Works, Wisconsin* (Research to practice series, 5). Madison, WI, USA: University of Wisconsin.
- Eremie, M. D. (2015). Counselors and teacher's ranking of factors causing truancy among secondary school students in rivers state Nigeria. *Singaporean Journal of Business Economics and Management Studies*, 3(12), 1–6.
- Gage, L., & Berliner, C. (1984). *Educational psychology* (3rd ed.). London: Houghten Mifflon Company.
- Ishak, Z., & Fin, L. S. (2013). Truants' and teachers behavior in the classroom. *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 103, 1228–1237.

- Joseph, A. (2008). *A study of elementary school children at risk for truancy: Exploring gender differences, services offered and other factors related to truancy* (Master thesis). Louisiana State University, New York.
- Miller, P., & Plant, M. (1999). Truancy and perceived school performance: An alcohol and drug study of UK teenagers. *Oxford Journals*, 34, 886–893.
- Seeley, K. (2006). *Guidelines for a national definition of truancy and calculating rates*. Denver, CO: National Center for School Engagement.
- Suleman, Q., Hussain, I., & Kayani, A. K. (2017). Factors contributing to truancy among secondary school students in Karak district, Pakistan. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(25), 65–74.
- Wadesango, N., & Machingambi, S. (2011). Causes and structural effects of student absenteeism: A case study of South African universities. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 26 (2), 89–97.