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STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING TEACHERS' ABSENTEEISM TOWARDS THE ATTAINMENT OF QUALITY EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the strategies for managing teachers' absenteeism towards the attainment of quality education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. Five research questions were raised and five hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of all 302 principals of the 302 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Census sampling technique was employed 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' Absenteeism for Quality Education Goals Attainment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State Questionnaire (MTAQEGAPSSRSQ)". The reliability coefficient of the instruments was determined using test-retest method and Pearson Product Moment Correlation and was found to be .78. 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 strategies such as the use of attendance monitoring systems (AMS), attendance-based incentives, improved working conditions and punitive measures were effective strategies that could be employed by principals to manage teachers' absenteeism in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study further found that all the strategies were adopted to a low extent by principals of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State except the use of attendance monitoring system (AMS) which was adopted to a high extent. Furthermore, it was found that majority of the male and female principals did not significantly differ in their mean scores on the extent the strategies employed to manage insecurity in their schools. It was concluded that school principals have not been dynamic and flexible in employing different strategies in the management of teachers' absenteeism in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State and this has been to the disadvantage of quality goals attainment at this level of education in the state. It was recommended among others, that school principals and school based management committees should periodically review their attendance management strategies with a view to determining what strategies would be most effective in managing teachers' absenteeism in their schools.

Keywords: Managing, Teachers' Absenteeism, Quality Education, Goals Attainment, Public, Senior, Secondary Schools, Rivers State, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

The underlining reason for the establishment of schools is instruction. Instruction in its simplest definition refers to teaching and learning carried out by teachers and learners respectively. It therefore holds true to aver that no matter how gigantic the structure of a school may be, no matter the state of the art facilities that may be present in it, no matter how conducive the environment and working conditions might be, and no matter the amount of educational resources available and accessible to the school, without effective teaching and learning going on in that school, the purpose, goals and objectives of that school have simply been defeated.

The end product of instruction is education. Education in this regard refers to the transfer of learning experiences, which include knowledge, skills, experience, and understanding from the more knowledgeable fellow (the teacher) to the less knowledgeable fellow (the learner), which brings about change in behaviour (behaviour modification) in the learner.

The recognition of the importance and potency of education as an agent of change and socioeconomic development of nations has also made nations of the world, including Nigeria to now adopt education as the tool for national development planning. Hence, all the aspirations and goals of the nation make up the educational curriculum content of schools, which are delivered by the teachers to the learners. This is to say that without the teacher, this process of instruction can simply not take place, and when instruction does not take place, educational goals are not achievable, which in consequence implies the non-attainment of national goals, too. This highlights the importance of the teachers' presence in the school.

The presence of the teacher is everything in the successful implementation of educational plans and programs. The teacher is the orchestrator of learning. He is the craftsman in the making or formation of the learner. He is the transformer and modifier of the behaviour of students. Apart from impacting academic knowledge to the learners, he is also a role model of acceptable character to them. He teaches and directs, corrects and counsels, rebukes and rewards, punishes and prunes, and does everything possible to nurture the learner into the expected graduate that the society wants to see. The goal is that by the end of the instructional session, students should be found worthy in learning and in character. This is the job teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State are employed to do and this may only be achieved when the teacher understands that his job description encompasses both manifest and latent functions. Teachers' presence is simply everything for quality goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

The goals of secondary education in Nigeria are clearly articulated in relevant sections of the National Policy on Education and they are to be achieved through quality teaching and learning. These goals adapted from Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) in the National Policy include:

- To offer unrestricted access to quality education to a large number of students irrespective of their socioeconomic background;
- To diversify the secondary education curriculum such that it captures the differences in talents of the Nigerian students and to provide for better opportunities for graduates of this level of education;
- To inculcate the spirit of self-reliance, industry and versatility in the students;
- To impress upon students the spirit of national consciousness and patriotism;
- To develop and project Nigerian culture, languages and art;

- To nurture and develop a sense of spirituality and morality, integrity and uprightness in students;
- To raise the spirit of self-respect and respect for others, valuing dignity of labour; and
- To foster unity and harmonious coexistence

Etor et al. (2019) summarized these goals as preparing the individuals for useful living within the society, and for higher education as well as equipping secondary school leavers with the needed skills for effective living within the society. These goals therefore become the indices by which quality education is judged.

Quality of education goals attainment is described in this study as the degree to which education outcomes or outputs measured by teachers' job performance indices and students' learning outcomes (academic achievements), conform to set objectives. The set objectives are defined generally by the goals of the senior secondary level of education as contained in the National Policy on Education for this level of education in the country (enlisted in the immediate subsequent paragraph), which in a nutshell is to produce secondary school graduates who are found worthy in learning (academic results) and in character (behaviour modification outcomes).

Teachers are indispensable factors in the quality education goals attainment process. Their physical presence is necessary for students' learning. As such, addressing teacher absenteeism must be a top priority in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Teacher absenteeism is the absence of a teacher from his duty post, which is the school. It is a phenomenon by which a teacher absconds from work, leaving vacuum in his instructional position. Teacher absenteeism could be with the consent of the school administrator or could be an expression of workplace deviant behaviour, perpetrated against the job ethics. The type of absenteeism that comes with consent could be as a result of official assignment or engagement that takes the teacher out of the school or classroom, teacher attendance of a professional development course, work leave, sick leave, child delivery leave or for any other reason that makes the teacher unavoidably absent, but this type of absenteeism always has the awareness and or approval of the school principal; thus this becomes easy to manage as modalities are sometimes put in place ahead of the teacher's absence to cover up the vacuum.

The end result is always half-baked students who most of the times are forced by the situation into thoughts and actions of examination malpractices to be able to "make their papers" in national examinations line WAEC and NECO. Majority of those who try to write these exams by themselves always end up coming out with abysmal performance which is not good enough for the furtherance of their education. Thus the secondary school education goal of preparing students for entry into higher institutions becomes defeated, too. It therefore becomes obvious that the effects of teacher absenteeism on quality goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State are multifaceted and far-reaching. As such, taming this "monster" of a deviant behaviour becomes the concern of affected stakeholders, and principals must thus be proactive in devising means of managing it.

Literature reviews on these strategies reveal two major themes: reward-oriented strategies and punishment-inclined strategies. While the reward-oriented strategies come with promises of reward or better job satisfaction in a bid to attracting and retaining increased teacher attendance, the punishment-inclined strategies are those that instill fear on teachers to deter them from the deviant behaviour. As such, the study would in discrete terms examine strategies such as the use of attendance-based incentives (ABI) (reward system), the use of punishment, improving teachers' working conditions, and the adoption of attendance monitoring system (AMS). It is in

the light of this background that the study seeks to explore managing teacher absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Quality education goals which aim at producing learners who are worthy in character and in learning are seriously threatened by the menace of teacher absenteeism in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Teachers' consistent presence on their duty posts is simply indispensable as the assurance of instruction wholly depends on it. Teachers are needed to teach the subjects that would give students the knowledge required to gain entry into higher institutions which is a critical goal of senior secondary education. Goals of developing students' affective domain, which would help them in peaceful coexistence with others, and in building the spirit of patriotism that would lead to their useful contribution to the society and to the nation at large are far from being attained as teachers who are saddled with the responsibility of role modeling and of inculcating these values and orientations into the students are hardly present and available to carry out these duties. Quality education which is mostly measured by students' academic performance in summative assessment and especially in the national examinations such as WAEC and NECO is simply nothing to write home about as absenteeism of teachers greatly undermine quality instructional delivery. Non-coverage of the curriculum, poor classroom management, rising cases of students' indiscipline and deviant behaviours which are fast becoming the norm in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State are all also traceable to teacher absenteeism. Parents and the government are worried and principals in these schools are challenged with the urgent task of devising effective means of managing the situation. It is the thought of the researcher that strategies such as use of attendance-based incentives, punishment, improved working conditions and the adoption of attendance monitoring system could help in managing this menace. This becomes what this study sets out to explore.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study was to explore how to manage the absenteeism of teachers for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Identify effective strategies of Principals in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Ascertain the extent attendance monitoring system (AMS) is adopted in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Examine the extent attendance-based incentives (reward system) are employed in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Evaluate the extent improved working condition is used in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Assess the extent punitive measures are employed in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- What are the effective strategies of principals in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent is attendance monitoring system (AMS) adopted in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent are attendance-based incentives (reward system) employed in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent is improved working condition used in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent are punitive measures employed in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. They were tested at a significance level of .05.

- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the effective strategies of principals in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on extent attendance monitoring system (AMS) is adopted in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on extent attendance-based incentives (reward system) are employed in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent improved working condition is used in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent punitive measures are adopted in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was theoretically anchored on the matter being investigated, which is managing teacher absenteeism for quality education goals attainment. Theory X and Theory Y are two sets of management theories proposed by Douglas McGregor in his book titled "Human side of enterprise" published in 1960 as cited in Ololube (2017). In this theory, McGregor tried to

explain how managers' perception of employees determine the approach they adopt in the management of the organization or their managerial behaviours towards such employees. McGregor thus grouped employees in organizations into two categories based on their behavioural tendencies, and the categories being X and Y. The X category employees form theory X workers and inform Theory X management while the Y category of employees form the Theory Y workers which informs theory Y managers.

The theory X describes the traditional management view of direction and control. This theory is of the assumption that:

- The average human being (employee in the organization) inherently dislikes work and will avoid it if possible.
- By reason of this human dislike of work, most people must be strictly monitored, coerced, controlled, directed, and where necessary - threatened with punishment to get them to do what they are supposed to do toward achieving the set objectives of the organization.
- The average human being has relatively little ambition, wishes to shy away from responsibility, prefers to be directed, and wants security above all.

As a result of the tendencies of the Theory X workers, the Theory X manager therefore needs to clearly specify tasks and use very close and firm monitoring and supervision together with a reinforcement system (comprising threat of punishment and promise of rewards as motivating factors). The theory X management approach is autocratic in nature, and as such, gets the work done but is not usually endeared to the hearts of the workers. What is most important however is that the work gets done. It is a transactional approach to management whereby "carrot and stick" are applied to reward workers for doing the right and punish them for doing the wrong.

Theory Y on the other hand is an integration of individual and organisational goals, which is the contemporary approach to organizational management, and it is informed by Theory Y type of workers. The basic assumptions of the theory Y are that:

- The average human being (employee in the organization) does not inherently dislike work, but sees work as a source of satisfaction or punishment depending upon controllable conditions.
- Employees in the organization exercise self-direction and self-control in their job performance for realizing set objectives of the organization. As such, external control and threat of punishment are not always necessary to bring about effort toward the objectives of the organization.
- When there are rewards associated with employees' achievement, commitment to objectives becomes the outcome. The most significant of such rewards would be those that satisfy employees' ego and self-actualization needs.
- Under proper conditions, the average employee learns, not only to accept responsibility, but also to seek out opportunities to take responsibility. The lack of ambition, avoidance of responsibility and emphasis on security demonstrated by some employees are often products of experience (either at that present job or from previous works) and not their inherent nature.

- Widely distributed in the population of the organization is a relatively high level of ingenuity and creative imagination towards solving organizational problems.
- The intellectual capabilities of the average worker are only partially utilized under the conditions of modern industrial life.

A theory Y approach to management seeks to establish a conducive working environment in which individual worker's personal needs and objectives can harmonize with the objectives of the organization. As such, there is often a cooperative relationship between workers and managers.

Relevance of Theory X and Theory Y to the Present Study

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y is relevant to this study as it highlights the nature of teacher absenteeism in the Theory X category of workers and the appropriate management strategies to be adopted by principals to ensure that teachers are regularly present in school to carry out their official responsibilities. The theory Y in the same vein highlights the need for the provision of a conducive working environment for teachers in the school to motivate their presence and commitment towards carrying out their duties as and when due. The theory X perfectly describes the nature of absenting teachers as those inherently loathing work and shying away from taking responsibilities and looking for every opportunity to abscond from work. Managing this category of teachers in the school would therefore require the use close and strict monitoring and supervision, coercion, control and a system of threats of punishment and promises of rewards to get them to be in school and to perform their works. All of these relate to the present study as the theory X management strategies are related to the strategies suggested in this study for managing teacher absenteeism in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

The Theory Y particularly highlights the place of favourable working conditions as a motivating factor for employee attachment and commitment to their jobs. According to the theory, employees' negative attitude towards work is mostly caused by their experiences at the work place, which are directly related to the working conditions and experiences teachers get in school. The study is of the view that when appropriate work conditions are made available for teachers, the problem of absenteeism will be reduced. Such conditions make for the harmonization of teachers' personal needs and objectives with those of the school organization. Summarily, Theory X and Theory Y is used to buttress the need for the combination of reinforcement system together with appropriate working condition and monitoring and supervisory practices to elicit assured presence of teachers in the instructional place. This is what is required for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Teachers' Absenteeism Conceptualized

Various scholars have conceptualized absenteeism in different ways and sometimes others use the word absence. Bucknall and Wei cited in Mwesiga (2016) defined absenteeism as an employee's failure to report for work when scheduled to do so. With this definition, it does not include absence from work by prior arrangement, approved annual leave and other statutory

vacation days. Sheema et al. (2018) observed that there is no national definition for absenteeism. However, they defined absence as a missed lesson or school day. This definition however, did not take into consideration the fact that some absences could be legitimate, implying that absence is absence irrespective of its cause or nature. Other scholars view absenteeism as any failure to report for work as scheduled, regardless of reasons (Cascio & Boudreau cited in Mwesiga, 2016). This definition presupposes that whenever an employee is not on the job as scheduled, he or she is absent, regardless of cause. From the definitions above, all authors have a typical characteristic and that is, referring to absenteeism as a failure of a worker to report to job.

Teacher absenteeism is a habitual or tendency of a teacher to be away from work or school without a good reason (Adeyemi, 2008), Meziobi and Nwadiani (2015) had observed that, teachers' truancy and absenteeism have assumed increasing and frustrating dimensions. While Ololube (2011) lamented that the teaching profession in Nigeria is fast becoming "a grumbling profession" and an increasing number of teachers are regarding teaching as "a part-time and pass-time occupation". This today is visibly seen in how lackadaisical teachers treat their jobs. Taking the definition of teacher absenteeism further from teachers not reporting to school, IBIS/NNED cited in Mwesiga (2016) defined Teacher absenteeism as teachers not available in school at the time of visits by the school inspection team. This includes teachers who have reported for work and have left for whatever reason before the arrival of the team and teachers yet to report to school. Teacher absenteeism is defined in the study as any type of teacher absence from the classroom; it includes both personal and professional absences (Ololube, 2011). Personal absences are defined as a teacher initiated absence from the classroom. The teacher has made the decision to be absent for reasons such as personal illness, family illness, personal business, death in the family, or moving. Professional absences are defined as a school, board, or other governmental agency initiated absence from the classroom (Ololube, 2011).

Types and Causes of Teachers' Absenteeism

Literatures have categorized the forms of teachers' absenteeism into two categories, vis-à-vis voluntary and involuntary absenteeism. They are reviewed below:

Voluntary Absenteeism and Quality Education Goals Attainment

Sometimes referred to as unscheduled or illegitimate or unproved or unplanned absenteeism, is a truant or deviant type of absenteeism wherein a teacher deliberately or indeliberately absents himself from school or from his work post without prior permission from or approval of the school authority. School administrators often frown at this type of absenteeism because it is against the professional code of conduct and contravenes the teachers' contract engagements. In most cases, the illegitimate absenteeism poses a lot of problems to schools such as not meeting schools' goals and objectives and downturn in overall productivity of the school (Mwesiga, 2016). Ololube (2011) found three factors that strongly correlated with teachers' propensity to be absent from work. These factors included job satisfaction, the perception of meaningfulness of work and stress.

Involuntary Absenteeism and Quality Education Goals Attainment

It is rare to find an organization that always records 100% employee attendance. There will always be genuine reasons why an employee may have to be absent from work or from his work post occasionally due to circumstances beyond his or her control or circumstances thought to be for the benefit of the organization. Such absences are with the prior knowledge of the management, and are thus scheduled. Such is referred to as involuntary or scheduled absenteeism (Sheema et al., 2018). Examples of this type of absenteeism include when a teacher is absent from work or his/her duty post due to annual or sick leave, maternity leave, sickness (with the knowledge of the school administration, on an official duty, on training, or any other purpose that may add to the benefit of the school. This type of teacher absenteeism does not have much negative effect (if there is any) on goal attainment of the school because it is anticipated and mostly planned for. In a situation where a teacher has to go for leave, modalities could easily be put in place for another teacher to cover up for his/her duties so that no instructional vacuum is created in the school and in the teacher's class.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING TEACHERS' ABSENTEEISM

The present study proposes four different approaches to the management of teachers' absenteeism in public senior secondary schools for quality education goals attainment in Rivers State. These have been gleaned from literature review, drawing inferences from what is obtainable in other organizations across the world. It is hoped that they could be effective in solving the problem of teachers' voluntary absenteeism which is currently dealing heavy blows on the attainment of the goals of senior secondary education in public schools in Rivers State. The proposed strategies in the study include: (a) the use of attendance monitoring system (AMS) (b) the employment of attendance-based incentives (ABI); (c) improved working condition; and (d) the adoption of punitive measures (punishment) for defaulters.

Attendance Monitoring System (AMS) for Managing Teachers' Absenteeism for Quality Education Goals Attainment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

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.

The attendance monitoring system could be either manual or electronic. Manual monitoring system is done basically by the use of three major "time-books" or records in the school, which include the attendance register, the movement logbook and the class attendance register or the instructional attendance register (Ololube, 2017). The attendance register is used to monitor 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 his/her 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.

Attendance-Based Incentives for Managing Teachers' Absenteeism for Quality Education Goals Attainment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Attendance management is the process of ensuring that teachers are present and productive at work. One of the strategies that employers use to improve attendance is to offer incentives, such as rewards, recognition, or bonuses, for meeting or exceeding attendance standards. However, not all types of attendance incentives are equally effective or appropriate for every situation. Literature identifies four common types of attendance incentives that could prove effective in organizations, which principals could also adopt in managing teachers' absenteeism in public senior secondary schools: monetary, non-monetary, individual, and team-based (Kassim & Onyango, 2022; Oluyemi, 2020; Ozoemena, 2013).

Monetary incentives are the most direct and tangible way of rewarding employees for good attendance. They can take the form of cash, gift cards, vouchers, or other financial benefits. The main advantage of monetary incentives is that they can motivate employees to show up and perform well, especially if they are linked to specific goals and criteria. They can also help attract and retain talent, as well as reduce absenteeism costs.

Non-monetary incentives are the opposite of monetary incentives. They are based on recognition, appreciation, feedback, or other forms of social or psychological rewards. They can include certificates, plaques, trophies, badges, thank-you notes, praise, public announcements, or other gestures of acknowledgment. The main advantage of non-monetary incentives is that they can foster a positive and supportive work culture, where employees feel valued and respected.

Improved Working Conditions for Managing Teachers' Absenteeism for Quality Education Goals Attainment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Poor working conditions are widely advanced in literature as one of the lead causes of voluntary absenteeism among teachers (Agubosim et al., 2023). It is one of the situational factors described in Steers and Rhodes process model of workplace absenteeism when they posited that employees' dissatisfaction with the job situation induces the propensity for them to voluntarily

absent themselves from work for the slightest of reasons (Ololube, 2017). The job situation which describes the working condition refers to the general condition of the school environment like the status of the physical facilities coupled with how teachers are treated by the administration of the school with respect to teachers' welfare management. When teachers perceive their welfare as poor, chances are that they seek equity adjustment through withdrawal tendencies from their jobs which could be manifested via emotional, psychological and physical withdrawal (Myeya & Rupia, 2022; Monafa, 2020).

Punitive Measures (Use of Punishment) for Managing Teachers' Absenteeism for Quality Education Goals Attainment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Punitive measures or use of punishment is an administrative disciplinary measure that adopts negative reinforcement to inflict some losses on teachers who absent themselves voluntarily from school. Voluntary absenteeism is a truant behaviour and an expression of teachers' deviance, which has been found to demean quality education goals attainment and as such must be frowned at and stopped at all cost by school administrators. Resorting to punishment is always advised as a last option in managing teachers' misbehaviour after every other attempt has failed; hence, if attendance monitoring systems, attendance-based incentives, improvement of working conditions and friendly dialogue with teachers who have shown negative attitude towards attendance have all failed, school administrators may have to resort to punishment. This is to ensure teachers maintain disciplined behaviour in the school, for as a matter of fact, the school as an organization has discipline as one of its manifest functions, and teachers must learn to practice what they preach to students. Disciplined conduct of teachers in attendance and punctuality to school, respecting school time, instructional delivery, attitude towards work, and in general idiosyncrasies in the work place is, as a matter of fact, a prerequisite for effective job performance. Thus, administrative disciplinary strategies or measures fall within the purview of teachers' disciplinary management (Nugraheni et al., 2020).

Disciplinary management (administrative disciplinary measures in this study) refers to those strategies that are used, coupled with the efforts made to reduce or prevent disciplinary problems in an organization (Senior Secondary Schools in this regard). A disciplinary measure is a way that a principal can tell a teacher that his actions are wrong and unacceptable. It also allows the principal to explain clearly what improvement is needed and gives teachers the opportunity to explain their side of a situation. According to Ololube (2011), disciplinary action is any action taken by the company in response to unsatisfactory employee performance or behavior. Employers use disciplinary procedures to tell employees that their performance or conduct is not up to the expected standard and to encourage them for improvement.

Ezeugbor and Eboatu (2018), the types of disciplinary measure adopted by principals on infracted teachers include warning, interdiction, suspension, termination, dismissal, compulsory retirement, and demotion. Truancy is a confirmed infraction. It is deliberate in most cases; hence the adoption of any of these disciplinary measures may be justified depending on the nature and severity of the case of truancy. It is however pertinent to note that the principals' powers are limited and there are certain disciplinary actions that are not within his powers, such as suspension, termination, dismissal, compulsory retirement or demotion of a teacher. Such measures may only be taken by higher powers like the Zonal Director, or the Chairman of the State Secondary Education Board. The Principal can however issue warning and query to truant

teachers, and if truancy continues, may report the truant teacher to the higher officers for appropriate actions. This is what any serious minded teacher would want to avoid by all means.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Osuji and Alabere (2023) carried out a study to investigate strategies for managing teachers' unethical behaviours for teacher-student relationship in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 278 principals consisting of 126 males and 152 females from 278 public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. A sample size of 126 principals consisting of 52 males and 74 females was derived using simple random sampling technique. The instrument was a ten (10) items self-structured questionnaire titled "Strategies for Managing Teachers' Ethical Behaviour for Teacher-Student Relationship Questionnaire" which was face and content validated by two experts in the Departments of Measurement and Evaluation and Educational Management. Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded reliability indexes of 0.86 and 0.84. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test was used in testing the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that set up monitoring system and using appropriate disciplinary actions to a high extent enhance effective teacher-student relationship in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The study relates with the present study in design and focus but differs from it in scope.

Garaba (2021) carried out a study to investigate the impacts of teachers' absenteeism on students' academic achievements in Tabora Municipal. It was specifically aimed at achieving the specific objectives namely: to identify factors contributing to teachers' absenteeism in public secondary schools in Tabora municipal. To examine the impacts of teachers' absenteeism in Tabora municipal public secondary schools on students' academic achievements. Finally, suggesting the way forward for solving the problems of absenteeism in public secondary school teachers in Tabora municipality. Mixed methods approach was used, where questionnaire and focused group discussion methods were employed as methods for data collection. Teachers (70) were selected basing on purposive sampling technique and students (100) were selected by simple random sampling in which 230 were the targeted sample provided with the closed and opened questionnaires filled in. Quantitative data were analyzed by using Microsoft office excel software (MS- Excel 2007) and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SSPS) version 20.0. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were calculated in order to make inference of the findings in which data were mainly presented in Percentages. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic Analysis. Findings in this study revealed that personal factors for teachers' absenteeism formed the highest rate (50 %) of absence followed by school factors (45.7%), environmental factors (1.4 %) and others (2.9 %) respectively. The study relates with the present study in focus as they both focused on teachers' absenteeism and how it may be managed. Both studies also relate partly in method of data analysis. However, while this study utilized mixed design and was carried out in Taraba state in 2021, the present study utilizes descriptive research design and is carried out in Rivers State in 2024.

Ubogu (2020) conducted study to establish the teachers' perception of the rate of absenteeism among school teachers in the Delta Central Senatorial District of Delta State. A total of 249 teachers in private and public schools took part in the study. The data obtained were

analyzed through the use of percentages and z-test. The findings showed that private and public school teachers differed significantly in their perceptions of the causes of teachers' absenteeism. The results also showed that poor salaries, from benefits and working conditions are more acceptable causes of teachers' absenteeism in school. The study relates with the present study in addressing issues about teachers' absenteeism. Both studies however differ in some dimensions: firstly, while the study was carried out in 2020, this present study is more contemporary (carried out in 2024); secondly, while the study was carried out in Delta state, the present study is carried out in Rivers State; thirdly, both studies differ in methods of data analysis; and fourthly, the study did not focus on how teachers' absenteeism could be managed, and this is a gap filled by the present study.

Sheema et al. (2018) carried out a study to find out the causes and effects of teachers absenteeism on student learning at public secondary level of district Kotli Azad Kashmir. The study was descriptive in nature. The effects of teacher's absenteeism were also seen on student's performance. The main objective of the study was to determine different factors which caused teachers absenteeism and also find out its effects on students learning. All teachers of public secondary schools of District Kotli Azad Kashmir constituted population of the study. Simple random sampling technique was used in this study to draw the sample from population and 20% schools (28 schools) were selected randomly as the sample of the study. From all selected 28 secondary schools of district Kotli 196 teachers were randomly selected for data collection process. However for the pilot testing process, ten secondary schools (five male and five female) of district Kotli were selected and these schools were also included in final study. The data obtained was tabulated and analyzed by using SPSS software. The study found that that job security of teachers in public sector, teachers low pay, lack of accountability, political influence in education, teachers' further education, lack of public interest in education matters, lack of facilities for teachers and long distance from school were some major causes of teachers' absenteeism. The study further found that the student performance in the classroom became low when a regular classroom teacher absented from the class. The study relates with the present study in design and in method of data analysis but differs from it in focus, in population and in content scope.

Asiyai (2017) carried out a study to explore teacher absenteeism in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. Three research questions were answered. The study is a survey, ex-post-facto in nature. The sample of the study comprised sixty teachers and twenty principals, selected through simple random technique from the entire population of public secondary schools in Ethiope East and Ethiope West local government areas of Delta Central senatorial districts of the state. Data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, qualification and experience were responsible for teacher absenteeism. Teacher related and school related variable were identified as possible causes of teacher absenteeism among public secondary schools in the two local government areas of Delta State. This study partly relates with the present study in focus in that they both concern teachers' absenteeism. However, whereas this study focused on identifying the causes of teachers' absenteeism, the present study focuses on managing it. In addition, but studies differ both in content and in geographical scope.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The study population consisted of 302 principals of the 302 public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. This comprised of 154

male principals and 148 female principals. Census sampling technique was adopted to sample the entire population as it was of a manageable size. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher for the study and was titled: “Managing Teachers’ Absenteeism for Quality Education Goals Attainment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State Questionnaire (MTAQEGAPSSRSRQ)”. The questionnaire contained two sections A and B. Section A solicited data on the demographic variables of the participants while section B contained the questionnaire items arranged in clusters pertaining to the research questions. There was total of 25 items in this section. The response pattern was structured after the modified 4 points form of Likert scale, namely: Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) with the values 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively.

The instrument had a reliability coefficient of .78 determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlations analysis of test-retest data obtained from a pilot study of respondents. Mean and standard deviation statistics was used to answer the researcher questions while independent samples t-test was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: What are the effective strategies of principals in managing teachers’ absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the effective strategies of principals in managing teachers’ absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 1: Independent t-test result on the existence of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the effective strategies of principals in managing teachers’ absenteeism

Gender	N	Mean	SD.	t-cal	DF	Sig.	Decision
Male Principals	143	2.872	.256	.010	283	.992	H ₀₁ Upheld
Female Principals	142	2.871	.240				
Total	285						

Significance level of .05

Table 1 shows the result of the independent samples t-test carried out to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the effective strategies of principals in managing teachers’ absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The table reveals that male and female principals had mean and standard deviation scores of 2.872±.256 and 2.871±.240 respectively. Furthermore, $t(283) = .010$, $p = .992$. Since the p value is greater than the significance level of .05, the null hypothesis is upheld and the alternate hypothesis is declined.

The study also found that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the effectiveness of these strategies in managing teachers’ absenteeism for quality education delivery in public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. in other words, there was high consensus among the two groups of respondents to the study that these

strategies would effectively bring about positive outcomes on principals' bid to managing the menace of insecurity in public Senior Secondary Schools in the state.

These findings are in tandem with those of several other researchers who had conducted related studies in similar areas of education concern. For example, Wali (2021) posited that attendance monitoring was an effective strategy of ensuring that teachers came to and stayed in school as expected. He went on to state that attendance monitoring could be done either manually through electronic means. Manual system of monitoring teachers' attendance could be done by the use of either of three major "time-books" or records in the school, which include the attendance register, the movement logbook and the class attendance register or the instructional attendance register (Amanchukwu & Ololube, 2015). The electronic means of monitoring attendance on the other hand is done by the use of electronic attendance cards or fingerprints. Apart from the fingerprint system and the use of cards, other systems of computer-based/electronic attendance monitoring include the camera capturing, and attendance verification videos, etc. These were found by Naen et al. (2021) to be very effective at eliminating several forms of attendance fraud that are empowered by the manual system like falsification of attendance time, attendance impersonation, etc.

Similarly, performance-based incentives was found effective at motivating desired employee behaviours (Glewwe et al., 2006), and could thus be effective at motivating teachers' performance. In the same vein, poor working conditions were widely advanced in literature as one of the lead causes of voluntary absenteeism among teachers (Agubosim et al., 2023) and as such, improving the working conditions of teachers would be an effective way of boosting their attendance to work. Finally, Ololube (2017) found that disciplinary or punitive measures were effective at curbing teachers' deviant behaviours like truancy and absenteeism, and examples of such disciplinary measures were identified to include warnings, reprimand, query, suspension, deprivation of privileges, salary deductions, demotion and dismissal.

Research Question Two: To what extent is attendance monitoring system (AMS) adopted in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent attendance monitoring system (AMS) is adopted in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 2: Independent t-test result on the existence of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent attendance monitoring system

Gender	N	Mean	SD.	t-cal	DF	Sig.	Decision
Male Principals	143	2.603	.316	.248	283	.804	H ₀₃ Upheld
Female Principals	142	2.593	.358				
Total	285						

Significance level of .05

Table 2 shows the result of the independent t-test conducted to investigate if there was a significant difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent attendance monitoring system is adopted in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The table reveals that male and

female principals had mean and standard deviation scores of $2.603 \pm .316$ and $2.593 \pm .358$ respectively. Furthermore, $t(283) = .248$, $p = .804 > .05$. Since the p value is greater than the significance level of .05, the null hypothesis is (H_{02}) is upheld and the alternate hypothesis is declined.

The findings of the study agree with Ololube (2017) and Naen et al. (2021) who found that attendance monitoring was a hallmark of effective school administration, and that the systems for monitoring teachers' attendance could be either manual or electronic. While Wali (2021) focused more on the manual system of monitoring attendance and acknowledged "three timebooks" vis-à-vis the attendance register, the movement logbook and the class attendance register or the instructional attendance register. Naen et al. (2021) opined that the electronic systems of monitoring teachers' attendance were more effective as they eliminated limitations associated with the manual systems of attendance monitoring, such as falsification of login time, attendance impersonation, amongst others. Ololube (2017) was also of the view that teachers' attendance record was one of the important school records that was useful for administrative decision-making in the school. This probably explained the reason for the high extent adoption of attendance monitoring systems among both male and female principals of public senior secondary schools in the state.

Research Question Three: To what extent are attendance-based incentives (reward system) employed in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent attendance-based incentives (reward system) are employed in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 3: Independent t-test result on the existence of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent attendance-based incentives (reward systems)

Gender	N	Mean	SD.	t-cal	DF	Sig.	Decision
Male Principals	143	2.261	.358	.396	283	.692	H_{02} Upheld
Female Principals	142	2.244	.340				
Total	285						

Significance level of .05

Table 3 shows the result of the independent t-test carried out to determine if there was a significant difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent attendance-based incentives (reward systems) are employed in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The table reveals that male and female principals had mean and standard deviation scores of $2.261 \pm .358$ and $2.244 \pm .340$ respectively. Furthermore, $t(283) = .396$, $p = .692 > .05$. Since the p value is greater than the significance level of .05, the null hypothesis is upheld and the alternate hypothesis is declined.

This finding is in contradiction with Ozoemena (2013) who eulogized the usefulness of performance-based incentives in school systems, and enumerated some of them to include increase in teachers' attendance to school; stimulating teachers towards punctuality and attachment to their jobs; creating psychological satisfaction for teachers, which leads to job

satisfaction; enhancing teachers' commitment to work; inculcating zeal and enthusiasm into teachers towards work, among others. The poor adoption of incentives by principals to encourage teachers' performance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State outrightly does not make for quality education delivery in these schools because the significance of incentives in employee performance improvement can simply not be doubted.

Research Question Four: To what extent is improved working condition used in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent improved working condition is used in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: Independent t-test result on the existence of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent improved working condition is used in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Gender	N	Mean	SD.	t-cal	DF	Sig.	Decision
Male Principals	143	2.047	.584	.593	283	.553	H ₀₄ Upheld
Female Principals	142	2.006	.588				
Total	285						

Significance level of .05

Table 4 shows the result of the independent t-test carried out to determine if there was a significant difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent improved working condition is used in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The table reveals that male and female principals had mean and standard deviation scores of $2.047 \pm .584$ and $2.006 \pm .588$ respectively. Furthermore, $t(283) = .593$, $p = .553 > .05$. Since the p value is greater than the significance level of .05, the null hypothesis is upheld and the alternate hypothesis is declined.

These findings are quite disturbing even as literature has found that poor working conditions are among the lead causes of voluntary absenteeism among teachers (Agubosim et al., 2023). According to Steers and Rhodes Process Model of workplace absenteeism, poor working condition of teachers always brings about teachers' dissatisfaction, which is sometimes expressed through voluntary absenteeism from work for the slightest of reasons (Ololube, 2017). Improved working condition of teachers encompasses the provision of requisite physical facilities together with fair and friendly treatment of teachers by the school principals, in addition to good welfare management in the school. Ololube (2017) reinforced this position by acknowledging that when teachers perceive their welfare or working conditions as poor, chances are that they seek equity adjustment through withdrawal tendencies from their jobs which could be manifested via emotional, psychological and physical withdrawal. As such, educational administrators must do everything within their reach to improve teachers' working conditions in their respective schools.

Research Question Five: To what extent are punitive measures employed in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent punitive measures are adopted in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 5: Independent t-test result on the existence of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent punitive measures are adopted in managing teachers' absenteeism

Gender	N	Mean	SD.	t-cal	DF	Sig.	Decision
Male Principals	143	2.261	.358	.396	283	.692	H ₀₂ Upheld
Female Principals	142	2.244	.340				
Total	285						

Significance level of .05

Table 5 shows the result of the independent t-test carried out to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent punitive measures are adopted in managing teachers' absenteeism for quality education goals attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The table reveals that male and female principals had mean and standard deviation scores of $2.261 \pm .358$ and $2.244 \pm .340$ respectively. Furthermore, $t(283) = .396$, $p = .692 > .05$. Since the p value is greater than the significance level of .05, the null hypothesis is upheld and the alternate hypothesis is declined.

The findings also did not seem to support Ezeugbor and Eboatu (2018) who found that the use of disciplinary measures such as warning, interdiction, suspension, termination, dismissal, compulsory retirement and demotion by principals on infracted teachers proved administrative effective. The need for principals to employ some of these measures from time to time is obviously imperative for quality education delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that school principals have not been dynamic and flexible in employing different strategies in the management of teachers' absenteeism in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State and this has been to the disadvantage of quality goals attainment at this level of education in the state. While there are various strategies which could be adopted in various scenarios either singularly or in combinations for effective management of this deviant behaviour among teachers, such as the use of attendance monitoring systems, the use of attendance-based incentives, improved working conditions and punitive measures, it is apparent that majority of principals only employ the use of manual attendance registers, which is even greatly limited in ensuring effective attendance management. Unless principals become proactive in the handling of this educational menace in the school system, achieving the lofty goals of public senior secondary schools in the state will simply remain a mirage.

Recommendations

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

- School principals and school based management committees should periodically review their attendance management strategies with a view to determining what strategies would be most effective in managing teachers' absenteeism in their schools.
- School administrators should endeavour to religiously maintain attendance records for the purpose of tracking teacher attendance. The school based management committee in this regard should review the attendance record with each teacher on a termly basis or more frequently with those developing absence trends, with a view to arresting the undesirable tendency in a timely manner.
- Teachers' attendance performance should be recognized and rewarded in some way, such as through recommendation letters to the schools board or through awards. This will send a strong message to teachers that their attendance is noticed.
- Deliberate effort should be made by educational employers to improve teachers' welfare and working conditions through salary rise and the provision of necessary working facilities that make the teaching job more satisfying to teachers; school principals should also help matters by adopting administrative strategies that make the school climate more friendly than hostile.
- The Senior Secondary Schools Board should empower principals and school-based management committees by allowing them more control in the area of disciplining erring teachers. This will improve accountability and possibly reduce teacher absenteeism.

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