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RESEARCH, POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AND CONSULTANCY

**THE EFFECTS OF TRUANCY AND ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A STUDY OF
SELECTED BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF
NAMWALA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA.**

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Certification of Approval

This thesis of **Violet Mwansa** has been approved as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master in Education Leadership and Management at Chalimbana University.

Examiner's Signature

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Declaration

I, **Violet Mwansa**, declare that this thesis represents my own work and that it has not been previously submitted for a degree, diploma or other qualifications at this or another university.

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my late brothers, Harrison and Solomon. I also wish to dedicate the work to my children Emmanuel, Mapalo and Marian, my mother, Charity and my husband, Mr. Muzungaire.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| MoNDP | Ministry of National Development Planning |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| UN | United Nations |

Abstract

Truancy can cease immediately to pose a problem of academic performance and development of skills for employment. After all, truancy to a large extent is an offshoot of misplaced values. Truancy not only affects the absent learner, but also negatively impacts on the teacher's ability to teach effectively. Failure to present classroom instruction in a sequential manner affects the teacher's ability to plan and present classroom instruction in a logical and organized way. To understand the relationship between truancy among learners and academic achievement, the study aimed to assess truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala district.

The study was premised on the following research objectives: to examine the level of truancy among learners, to find out the challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners and to assess the relationship between truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District. The study employed a mixed method design. The sample consisted of fifty-five (55) respondents comprised of forty-nine (49) teachers, three (3) Deputy Headteachers and three (3) Headteachers from three selected boarding secondary schools in Namwala District.

From the key findings, it was established that truancy levels were high in the selected schools under study. Furthermore, the study found out that teachers faced challenges in the face of truancy in various ways such as poor curriculum coverage, challenges on executing lesson plans, poor understanding of subject contents and challenges in fostering a culture of discipline. Lastly, the findings of the study revealed that truancy and academic performance were critically related. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that the learners be enlightened on the importance of school learning and proper use of time in school and at home by their teachers, parents and stakeholders. Further recommendation was made to school Headteachers and teachers to ensure an encouraging, friendly and facilitated environment inside the school for their students to reduce their truant behaviour.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter provides the background to the study, the statement of the problem and the main objective of the study. It also presents the specific objectives, research questions and limitations of the study. Lastly, it explains the significance, delimitation and limitations of the study, theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the definitions of the terms that will be used in the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Education is the only way in which knowledge, skills, values and habits can be passed on from one generation to the other. Thus, the world today is more resolved in educating its citizens than never before in the history of evolution of man. This is evident through commitments by both the developing and developed countries to put measures to educate every child and educate them well. United Nations (UN) member states, Zambia inclusive met in New York in 2015 met as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Education plays a critical role in creating poverty free societies and ensures that people live in peace and harmony. This led to the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 (Kabanga and Mulauzi, 2020).

Improved education and skills development are instrumental in creating societies that are better able to respond to social and economic development challenges they face. The availability of a skilled workforce is necessary to support the transition of all economic sectors towards highly productive activities, raise labour productivity, attract investment into the country, reduce poverty and build resilience in the economy. Issues of lifelong learning, continuing professional development and knowledge production, alongside innovation, are key to building the capabilities of individuals and society as a whole and achieving gender equality (MoNDP, 2017). From a global perspective, economic and social developments are increasingly driven by the advancement

and application of knowledge. However, the transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the learner is one process that has faced a number of challenges in as much as achieving academic success is concerned. One of the challenges comes in form of truancy among learners.

A number of terms are related and used interchangeably with learner truancy. These concepts are familiar in meaning and similar to truancy. These concepts include absenteeism and school phobia. The terms absenteeism and truancy are used interchangeably for the purpose of this study because they are similar in meaning although they differ slightly in their contextual application. Truancy can be defined as unauthorized absence from school: the learner reports for school for a brief moment and later on disappears (Railsback, 2004: 74). Truancy is also closely linked to partial absence as the learner leaves school before closing time (Moseki, 2004). According to Edward & Malcon (2002), truancy can also be explained as the act or condition of being absent without permission.

The influence of student truancy on academic performance has always concerned all stakeholders in education. The influence of student absenteeism on academic performance has often been a subject of concern for schools for a long time. This has largely been because the teacher and the school authorities have always been under extreme pressure to complete a given syllabus and also to perform well in national examinations. They have therefore felt that, those students who absent themselves from regular instruction for whatever reasons, miss important knowledge and competencies, a fact that is bound to influence somehow their academic performance and achievements (Bantu, 2003). There is limited data on the prevalence and associated factors of truancy in southern Africa. Yet truancy should attract the attention of educators and policy makers as it may be associated with adolescent behaviors.

Truancy affects the absent learner, but also negatively impacts on the teacher's ability to plan and present classroom instruction in a logical and organized way. Failure to present classroom instruction in a sequential manner affects the absent learner and negatively impacts on the teacher's ability to plan and present classroom instruction in a logical and organized way. Failure to present classroom instruction in a sequential manner affects the progress of all learners as it complicates general classroom management (Bond, 2004). Therefore, truancy is a great hindrance to the smooth flow of the teaching and learning process in any classroom. Truancy, particularly in secondary education, represents a serious issue deserving attention in communities across the

nation. Most often treated as a management and disciplinary problem, serious attention to the underlying causes of truancy is usually given after the learner's absence from school becomes frequent or chronic (Dembo and Gullledge, 2009). To increase school engagement, several systems, through government and stakeholder interventions, have been implemented in school settings to reduce truancy, in belief that there is an underlying relationship between truancy and academic performance.

According to McCluskey *et al.* (2004), truancy is caused by a number of factors such as lack of interesting and challenging curriculum; a desire for hedonistic activities with peers; negative self-image and self-esteem; lack of subject interest; lack of personal interest in studies; the poor teaching skills of a teacher also keep away students from school; lack of confidence in a teacher; inadequate relations between a student and their teacher and distance to school. Reid (2006) emphasizes on the fact that learners tend to develop power in groups and influence each other. In this way, even the learners that are doing fine can easily be misled by the friends and start dodging classes in which they were doing better simply because they want to be identified by the group of friends. Children at this level can become truant. Sometimes both parents and teachers may not even know better the behaviour of their son or daughter. Interventions aimed to reduce truancy should be designed and implemented with due consideration of the associated factors. However, various researches on this subject only focus on truancy but lack on the relationship between truancy among learners and their academic performance. It is with this background therefore that this study sought to examine truancy and academic performance of learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In spite of many initiatives undertaken by government and interested stakeholders to reduce truancy among learners, there is still low rates of school attendance which affect their academic performance. Furthermore, while a number of studies have examined absenteeism and its causes among learners in selected academic institutions, very few studies have been undertaken on the actual relationship between truancy and academic performance of learners in Namwala District. Given these situations, there was need to assess the relationship between truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools.

1.3 **General Objective**

To assess the effects of truancy on academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District of Zambia.

1.4 **Specific Objectives of the study**

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. Examine the level of truancy among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District.
- ii. Find out the challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District.
- iii. Assess the relationship between truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District.

1.5 **Research Questions**

As a way of addressing the above listed objectives, the research attempted to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the level of truancy among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District?
- ii. What challenges are faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District?
- iii. What is the relationship between truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District?

1.6 **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study comes in many forms as explained below:

- The findings of the study are expected to be useful to the organization, country, policy makers, researchers and other institutions by identifying problem areas and take corrective actions aimed at reducing truancy rate among learners, hence improve their academic performance.

- The findings and recommendations from this study may also create awareness among stakeholders such as teachers, parents, learners and community leaders to participate in improving academic performance of learners.
- The study would contribute new insights to the existing body of knowledge and help bridge the gap in the existing literature once undertaken.

1.7 Delimitation of the study

The study at hand was delimited to selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District. The study focused on assessing the relationship between truancy and academic performance in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala district. Boarding secondary schools in Namwala District were selected because they are within the researcher's place of residence.

1.8 Limitations of the study

According to Best and Kahn (2009), limitations are referred to those conditions which are beyond the control of the researcher and may also place restrictions on the conclusions of the study. In view of this, the current study faced a number of limitations, such as failure of some respondents to give adequately full information as desired by the researcher, scanty literature and unavailability of specific respondents since those in authority, the school administrators, were not always available due to their busy schedules. Scanty literature required to conduct a conclusive study on truancy and academic performance posed a challenge for the researcher to pick up the references on the subject. Notwithstanding the imperativeness of this study, financial constraints restricted the researcher to only focus on collecting responses from three boarding secondary schools of Namwala District. Further limitation were faced by the researcher due to the interviewees' individual characteristics that posed a challenge to the smooth running of the data collection process.

To mitigate the limitations of this study, a number of measures were taken by the researcher. Firstly, the researcher undertook a study of the literature related to this research in order to ensure that all relevant variables to be used in the study were to be applied correctly. Secondly, detailed data collection instruments were used to enable respondents to give all the required information for the study without response bias. Furthermore, the researcher was mindful in phrasing questions

in such a way that the respondents were not inclined to take a sides when responding. Prior to the study, pre-appointments were made with the managers of the selected schools in order to carry out a smooth data collection exercise.

1.9 Theoretical framework

The study was based on Creemers' comprehensive model of educational effectiveness. The Creemers comprehensive model of educational effectiveness was developed from a review of the empirical research on effective instruction and consideration of Carroll's learning model (Creemers, 1994). Attention to educational effectiveness has its origins in research and practice with respect to school effectiveness. The early research projects carried out by Brookover *et al.* (1979) and Rutter *et al.* (1979) have shown that schools differ from each other with respect to the outcomes of comparable groups of students. Some schools prove to be more effective than other schools and more effective schools have some characteristics in common which ineffective schools do not have. In educational policy making and practice the idea of effective schools also draws a great deal of attention, which is understandable because it offers possibilities of improving schools to get better results. In educational theory and research these results stimulated the start of research projects looking for factors that could explain effectiveness in education.

Educational effectiveness provides and requires a holistic theory on education, dealing with input, process, context and products of education. The first question has to do with results, outcomes of education. This includes the criteria for educational effectiveness. From a technical point of view, problems on the criterion side can be solved, but theoretically, on the conceptual side, there are some problems connected with the criteria themselves. In the past most of the educational effectiveness research used academic outcomes as the only criterion. This choice of criterion was criticised and at the time being pleas were made for multiple criteria for effectiveness. Even when we follow that line of thinking, we will have to keep in mind that there are always arguments against use of these multiple outcomes. Also, when the effects of effective schools on education are quite small, they can be very crucial with respect to the individual careers of students (Creemers, 1994).

A remaining problem is the instability of effectiveness, but this probably has not only to do with the choice of criterion but more with the instability of education as a whole, between subjects,

between classes and between grades. In the model the school level factors are defined as conditions for classroom level factors. This definition restricts the selection of school level factors to only those factors conditional for and directly related to quality of instruction or to time allowed/opportunity to learn. According to Creemers (1994), school level factors should either promote cohesion between teachers stimulate similar effective teacher behaviour in all classrooms or control what is going on in classrooms. At the school level a distinction can be made between educational and organizational aspects.

1.10 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework was inspired and used by Creemers (1994) following his study of educational effectiveness. Student achievement is the dependent variable whereas the different indicators arise from the independent variables. Another interpretation of this is that: Student achievement which is the dependent variable is determined or measured by a number of factors such as quality, time and opportunity at different levels of the teaching-learning process. This present study employs the conceptual framework presented as shown in Figure 1.

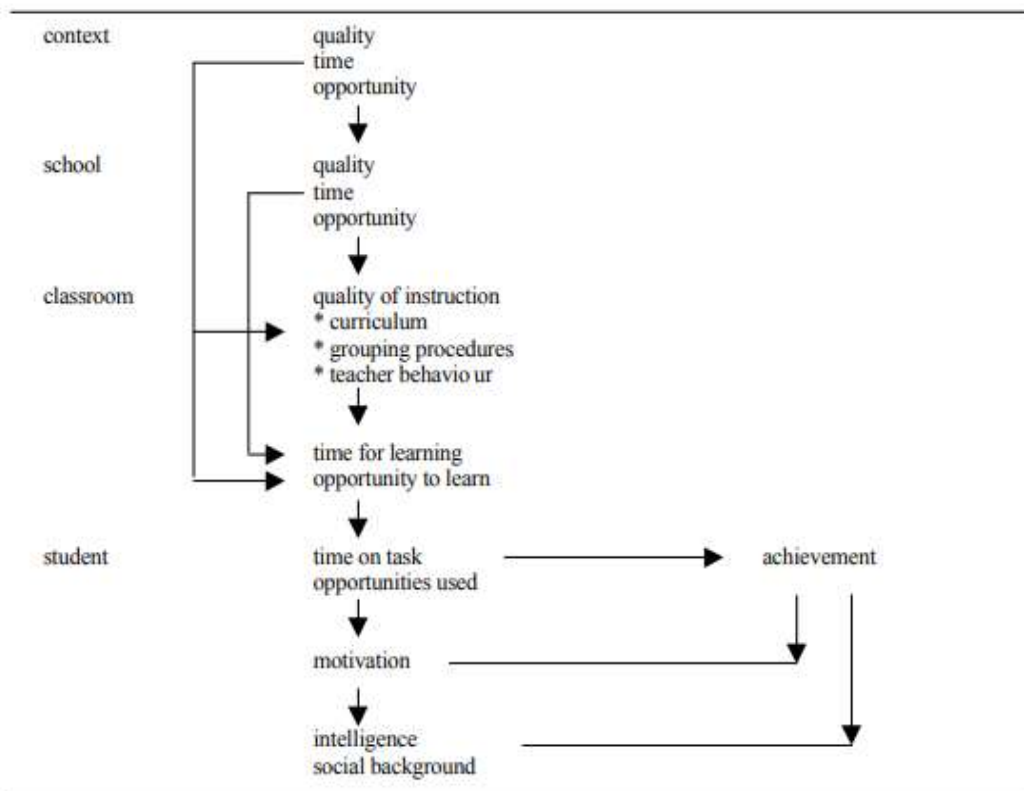


Figure 1: *Basic Model of Educational Effectiveness (Creemers, 1994).*

According to Creemers (1994), the model shows how the levels in the model influence student outcomes. Time on task and opportunities used at student level are influenced by time for learning and opportunity to learn provided by the teacher at classroom level, and these are influenced by the quality of instruction. The more adequate the instruction, the more time students can spend on learning and the more opportunities to learn they will have. For example, more school subjects or topics within subjects will be offered. But even when teachers achieve very high levels of time for learning and opportunity to learn, ultimately the students decide how much time they will actually spend on their school work and how much opportunities to learn they will actually use. Therefore, these concepts are directly related to outcomes.

In addition, outcomes are determined by student factors such as aptitudes, social background, and motivation. Quality, time and opportunity at the classroom level are influenced by factors at the school level and the school level is influenced by factors at the context level. Outcomes therefore cannot be seen as either an accomplishment of classroom factors only as in many studies on teacher behaviour or of school factors only as in many studies of school policies. The influences of the context and school levels are indirect and mediated by the classroom level. At the student level, background, motivation and aptitude strongly determine outcomes. Time on task is determined not only by motivation, but also by the time provided by the school and by processes at the school and classroom levels. Time on task has to be filled by opportunities to learn. These refer to the supply of learning material, experiences, and exercises. The opportunities offered in the instructional process and students' actual use of the offered experiences are not necessarily equivalent. At the classroom level, teacher behaviour is central (Creemers 1994).

Teachers make use of curricular materials and they carry out grouping procedures in their classrooms. However, teachers need curriculum material, which should be consistent with grouping procedures such as mastery learning or co-operative learning. Examples of such factors with respect to the curriculum are explicitness and ordering of goals and content and structure and clarity of content. Examples of teacher behaviour are management, clarity of presentation, evaluation, feedback and corrective instruction. At the school level, factors that deal directly with activities at classroom level such as rules and agreements about aspects of classroom instruction are integrated in the model so are organizational factors which determine what happens in classrooms from a greater distance such as a school policy professionalizing and supervising

teachers to comply with the school standards, or a school culture inducing and supporting effectiveness. Also conditions for time such as a school policy on homework and student absenteeism and for opportunity to learn such as rules and agreements about how to implement the curriculum are specified (Stringfield, 1994).

Creemers' comprehensive model of educational effectiveness is relevant to this study because it factors in the variable of instruction time as one of the major determinants of student achievement.

1.11 Definition of operational terms

Academic Performance: is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has attained their short or long-term educational goals.

Boarding School: is an institution where children live within premises while being given formal instruction. In a boarding school, pupils study and live during the school year with their fellow learners and possibly teachers or administrators.

Learner: a person who is learning a subject or skill.

Truancy: is any intentional, unjustified, unauthorized, or illegal absence from compulsory education.

1.12 Summary

This chapter presented the background of the study, the statement of the problem and the main objective of the study. It also presented the specific objectives of the study and the associated research questions that the study was intended to give answers to. Lastly, it explained the significance of the study, delimitation and limitations of the study, theoretical and conceptual frameworks as well as definitions of the terms used in the study. This dissertation, in brief, was aimed at assessing truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools in Namwala district. The following chapter reviews the relevant literature on the Global, African and Zambian perspective in relation with the topic under study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter focused on the review of literature related to this study. The literatures reviewed in this study can be contextualized as global, African and Zambian studies. However, the literature reviewed opens with the understanding on truancy and academic performance in boarding secondary schools. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the topic under study. This chapter therefore is reviewed in accordance with the themes of the study.

2.1 Truancy levels on global, regional and national views

The education system of every country aim at developing the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the citizenry by equipping the individuals with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values with the view to promoting the development of one's country. Development in whichever form needs educated people. Therefore education is development. Education offers new life and chances for people, decreases the double-problem of poverty and strengthens a voice in society. Against this background, attending school becomes most critical to every country's development. According to Marah (2006) in the school system, it is required that both the teachers and students are kept in a permanent school walls as in the case of the western education. With the structured and permanent walls, it is expected that both teachers and learners are kept in constant touch for effective supervision and observation. This calls for the regular attendance of both the teachers and students.

According to Teasley (2004), staying in school is the first step to a good education and in order to achieve academic excellence, the students are mandated by the school laws to attend school daily but due to some factors, most students absent themselves from formal school activities hence engaging in truancy. When children attend schools on a regular basis, they take on important step towards reaching their full potentials, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. The more time they spend around other children whether in the classroom

or as part of a school team or club, the more chance they have of making lots of friends and feeling included, boosting social skills, confidence and self-esteem.

The term truancy has been conceptualized by different authors in different ways. According to the International Dictionary of Education (2002), truancy is defined as a “deliberate absence from school without parental knowledge”. In the same manner, the New Western Comprehensive Dictionary Special Price Edition (2004), said that truancy is “when a students stays away without permission, anyone who absent himself from work or duty without good reasons, the knowledge of the authority”. The above definitions are in agreement that truancy occurs when a student absents himself from school without due permission either from parents or from the related authorities. On its popular meaning, Carter (2000) considers truancy as a: deliberate absence from school on the part of the pupil without the knowledge and consent of parents; absence of the pupil from the school for which no reasonable or acceptable excuse is given, this latter concept broadens the definition considerably and makes it synonymous with unexcused absence.

Similarly Adeyemo (1999) defines truancy as a delinquent act which occurs when a child often stays away from the school without good reasons. These definitions indicated certain elements of truancy that must be stressed and in order to have a proper understanding of the concept. Carter’s definition carries the implication that the reason for absence is invalid from the view points of parents and school authorities and not from that of the truant. According to Adeyemo (1999), there are three types of truancy; habitual truancy, occasional truancy and casual truancy.

Habitual truancy is the type of truancy that occurs when a student truant constantly and continually absent from school without the due knowledge or consent of his parents and school authorities. Habitual truants are mainly those students who miss numerous full days of school academic activities. It is important to note that students who are habitual truants have high chances of falling behind in their school work, decline in their academic performance and even lose their attachment or positive attitudes towards schools (Ezeani, 2006).

Occasional truancy occurs when a student does not constantly and continually absent himself from school. In this type of truancy, the students’ level of absenteeism from school without the permission of parents or school authority is irregular. Causal truancy occurs when the students’ absence from school is by chance. This type of truancy or unexcused absence from school is not

regular and constant but happens by chance. For instance students who remained lurking within sound of the school bell, so that they could attend those lessons, which interested them (Ezeani, 2006).

According to Healy (2006), growing numbers of teachers in secondary school have express concern that students are becoming uninterested in their class because of their commitment in non-academic activities outside the school. Acknowledging the severity of the truancy problems, educators are exploring creative techniques to increase class attendance, such as innovative teaching methods and better equipped classroom. Truancy behaviour of students is an issue that affects many people, because truancy has been associated with various criminal behaviours such as vandalism, burglary, drug use, gangsterism, cultism, raping and armed robbery. Also truancy can be the symptoms for other emotional, mental, economic and family situation.

Echebiwe (2009) is of the view that truancy is detrimental to students' achievement, promotion, graduation, self-esteem and employment potentials. Clearly, students who miss school fall behind their peers in the classroom. This in turn, leads to low self-esteem and increases the likelihood that at risk students drop out of school. Truancy behaviour among basic science students is at alarming rate. Echebiwe (2009) adds that children who engage in truancy might have found life in classroom dull, boring and uninteresting. Also, they must have found greatest pleasure and interest in activities outside the school and the classroom environment. Such children usually leave their homes giving everybody the impression that they have gone to school, but stooped on the way side to participate in what they like to enjoy most. This they do until it is time for school dismissal and they return home. Some others are caught playing round the street with others truants, engaging in gambling and loitering round the school premises. This is because some truants get scared of some unfriendly treatment from teachers, unpleasant encounters during classroom work, unnecessary harassment and embarrassment by the senior students. These lead to loss of interest in academic by the students.

Besides, some truants engage in truancy because of the feeling of inferiority among their classmates, laziness to class work, challenges of classroom test and assignments, verbal abuse and threats of classroom instruction, school phobia, anxiety, bullying, lack of skills needed to perform well at school, lack of priority to education and academic. Tenibiaje (2009) opines that the impact

of truancy is very obvious and usually a negative one on the truants students, parent and the society at large.

Truancy results in loss of intellectual development and lack of improvement of individual. Also, it leads to poor academic performance at the end of school periods, school terms and school year. Truancy as a threat to academic performance of the students is believed by Nwachukwu (1998) to reduce the quality of education the child receives. It reduces the standard of academic achievement of a child, it leads to the fall of educational standard in schools. It increases the rate of examination malpractice and poor examination results in both internal and external examination. Truancy is also a factor that contributes to joblessness, unemployment and underemployment of most adults today, just because they engaged in the act of truancy during their school days.

According to Phurutse (2005: 14), learner absenteeism was caused by three factors which were as follows: individual and personal characteristics, socio-economic reasons and school based reasons. Phurutse (2005: 18) maintains that illness is a primary reason for legitimately authorized absenteeism in South Africa and elsewhere. Age was mentioned as another reason for absenteeism because, according to Railsback (2004: 39), learners at the ages of 16 to 17 years were prone to absenteeism but in practice learners as young as 13 were adversely affected by absenteeism and truancy.

Morris and Rutt (2004: 94) argue that gender was one of the individual and personal reasons for absenteeism but he did not substantiate how gender contributed to learner absenteeism. Morris and Rutt (2004: 96) maintain that males were more likely to be absent without authorization. He emphasize that the difference is not statistically significant but indicate that, to a lesser extent, violence and sexual assault could increase the rate of absenteeism among female learners. According to Railsback (2004: 39), learners who are not necessarily struggling in their work were absent; learners from wealthy families had psychological problems, poor social skills and low self-esteem which resulted in their being absent. Socio-economic reasons was the second group of factors contributing to learner absenteeism. These factors were common in most poverty stricken communities.

According to Railsback (2004: 49), lack of parental involvement in the learner's education plays a negative role in the achievement and attendance of learners. According to Malcolm *et al.* (2003:

65), there is a link between parental and caregiver involvement in learner education and attendance. Railsback (2004: 51) emphasises that when more adults are available in the household, the more likely that the learner from that household would be in school as required.

In Africa, students are also faced with the problem of truancy as well. Truants, in this continent tend to feel insecure and see themselves as ‘outcasts and rejected at schools’ as learners often feel confused and lost and do not know where to turn for help (Van Breda, 2006). It was further found that the primary cause of truancy was the school system itself. Keys concluded that the contributing factors of truant behavior were school policies, rules, and curriculum and educator characteristics. The author also showed that classrooms that rated high in competitiveness and educator control, and relatively low on educator support had higher truancy rates. Britten (2002) found that educator unpleasantness and antipathy towards certain learners were significant factors in truant behavior. Ryan (2001) found that institutional factors such as teachers, boring subjects, gang affiliation, and detention contributed to truancy among secondary students in South Africa.

According to Kabungo (2018), when talking about the teacher approach, the MOE document Zambia education curriculum framework (2013) says “this means that everything that the teacher does must be focused on what learners want to know, understand and be able to do successfully”. It further states that “when teachers plan and teach, they should focus on helping learners acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions that will enable them achieve the desired outcomes”. Some methodologies and teachers approach may not be understood by the students and in this sense hence this can easily make them start missing classes. This is because there are times when teachers go to class so that they can be marked present without doing anything sensible there. Some teachers teach a subject they do not like at all that is why they teach without a means of motivation to the learners. Some do not even care if learners understand what they teach or not.

2.2 Challenges faced by teachers due to truancy among learners

Since the inception of accountability and testing in the world of education began, efforts to evaluate teachers based on student achievement have become a primary focus (Kuppermintz, 2003). This move has resulted in the growth of educational outcome indicators. While most schools and districts have yet to develop and implement viable performance indicators (Meyer, 1996), value-added models have begun to be used. Of the various value-added models used in the literature, a

common characteristic is that they measure the school performance or the school inputs using a statistical regression model which includes many variables as possible in order to isolate the contribution of schools from other sources of student achievement (Meyer, 1996).

Truancy is one of the major antisocial discipline problems among secondary school students in Nigeria. The concept and acts of indiscipline have received a lot of attention by researchers. Peck opined that the various behavioural disorders like stealing, violence, drug abuse, examination malpractice, sexual abuse and truancy have so undermined effective teaching-learning processes that some teachers have become helpless and disorganized in their task of impacting knowledge to the learners. Learner absenteeism affects the absent learner, but also negatively impacts on the teacher's ability to plan and present classroom instruction in a logical and organized way. Failure to present classroom instruction in a sequential manner affects the absent learner and negatively impacts on the teacher's ability to plan and present classroom instruction in a logical and organized way. Failure to present classroom instruction in a sequential manner affects the progress of all learners as it complicates general classroom management (Stronge *et al.*, 2011).

There is abundant evidence that teacher effectiveness raises student achievement (Borman & Kimbal, 2005). Effective teachers do make a difference in the lives of students. Marzano *et al.*, (2001) found that an individual teacher can have a powerful effect on students even if the school does not. This important finding recognizes the importance of having qualified and effective teachers in the classrooms. In recent years, research on teacher effectiveness has reported a direct relationship to student learning (Stronge *et al.*, 2011). It has been documented how important effective teachers are to the success of students. While these studies are just the tip of the iceberg to understanding the importance of teachers being effective, the results reveal that both students and schools require quality teachers to excel.

Although there is a growing body of evidence about teacher effectiveness, in general, and instructional planning, more specifically, there still remains a dearth of clear, direct evidence regarding teachers' lesson planning. Understanding the lesson planning process, and how to intervene in the process to improve instruction, is helpful for both teachers and administrators. This can be done through watching instruction and also through the pre-active or planning phase. When it comes to research regarding the relationship between the planning process and that which leads to effective instruction, there is a paucity of research available. As Jasper (1986) stated, it is

important to understand the relationship between the planning process and effective instruction; until this relationship is understood, administrators and supervisors cannot help teachers plan effectively. There also is concern in the field as it is not really known how to differentiate good and bad plans, or how these plans play out in the classroom, so principals cannot use only the lesson plan to effectively monitor instruction.

In order for an effective teacher to excel in planning and preparation, they must “design instruction that reflects an understanding of the disciplines they teach the important concepts and principles within that content, and how the different elements relate to one another and those in other disciplines” (Danielson, 2007). The ability to transition between the various related disciplines makes the task of designing a lesson more coherent. Another quality of instructional effectiveness is the ability to design coherent instruction and sound assessment in terms of the approach to topics which are appropriate to the developmental range of students in the class. In addition, Stronge *et al.* (2011) make the claim that effective teachers are able to increase clarity in their coherent instruction and assessment. Increasing the clarity and having coherent instruction helps meet the needs of all students as it ensures logical bonds between concepts, student understanding, and student focus for students at any level. Truancy is one of the hindrances to effective planning by teachers and remains one of the greatest challenges faced by teachers in the teaching and learning process (Stronge *et al.*, 2011).

2.3 Relationship between truancy and academic performance

Attending school forms an integral part in the performance and achievement of learners. Attendance is also an important factor in school success among youth. Epstein and Sheldon (2002: 31) indicate that better attendance was related to higher academic achievement for learners of all backgrounds particularly for learners with lower socio-economic status. In American context, starting from the kindergarten, learners who attend school regularly score higher on tests than their peers who are frequently absent. Chronic truancy, which was referred to as frequent unexcused absence, was a predictor of undesirable outcomes in adolescence, including academic failure, school drop-out, substance abuse, gang involvement and criminal activities (McCluskey *et al.*, 2004).

Tenibiaje (2009) opines that the impact of truancy is very obvious and usually a negative one on the truants students, parent and the society at large. Truancy results in loss of intellectual

development and lack of improvement of individual. Also, it leads to poor academic performance at the end of school periods, school terms and school year. Truancy as a threat to academic performance of the students is believed by Nwachukwu (1998) to reduce the quality of education the child receives. It reduces the standard of academic achievement of a child, it leads to the fall of educational standard in schools. It increases the rate of examination malpractice and poor examination results in both internal and external examination. Truancy is also a factor that contributes to joblessness, unemployment and underemployment of most adults today, just because they engaged in the act of truancy during their school days.

In the US, factors, which contributed to learner absenteeism, include family health, financial concerns, poor school climate, drug and alcohol abuse, transportation problems and differing community attitudes towards education (Teasly, 2004). There is evidence to suggest that in the US differences by disability status had a stake in learner absenteeism. Learners classified as having a disability were more likely than students without a disability to have missed three or more school days within the past month. In 2005, 29% of eighth-graders with a disability reported missing three or more school days within the past month compared to 20% of students without a disability (Baker *et al.*, 2007).

In the US, difference by school-wide percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch yielded variations in the rate of learner absenteeism. Learners attending schools where more than 75% of the learners were eligible for free or reduced price lunches a proxy for poverty, same as feeding scheme in Southern Africa were reported frequently absent. These learners were more likely to report missing three or more days of school than were learners attending schools with a 10% or lower eligibility rate (Ready, 2010). Ready (2010) contends that 25% of eighth-graders and 22% of fourth-graders at school with a greater than 75% eligibility rate, compared with 17% and 16% respectively, of their counterparts in school where 10% or fewer learners were eligible were reported to be chronic absentees.

To reduce learner absenteeism in American schools, the government set national goals which had to be met in order to curb and prevent learner absenteeism (Reid, 2006:39). The No Child Left behind Act enacted in January 2002 provides increased accountability for states, school districts, schools and more flexibility for states and local agencies in how they use federal education dollars. The Adequate Yearly progress measures hold elementary school and middle schools accountable

for learner absenteeism (Teasly, 2004). There is evidence to suggest that in Australia over the recent years, there has been more time devoted to researching a better understanding of learner absenteeism, truancy and dropping out of school (Bond, 2004: 13). Teasly (2004) maintains that in the US no research answered the question of whether some strategies to combat learner absenteeism worked better than others and if there were resources which offered step-by-step guidelines for developing and improving learner attendance. Reid (2006) argues that the available literature on learner absenteeism presents a myriad of ideas and theories relating to tackling absenteeism but not a great deal of evidence to reinforce their effectiveness. According to Reid, what remains apparent was that raising attendance within schools was not a simple prospect.

Concealed absence is more prevalent to learners in high schools and when absenteeism involves parent participation, comprehending the motives and reasons for such absences and negotiating relevant responses by the school became different to those situations of hidden truancy (Bonzos, 2005:17). According to the Auditor General Victoria (2004: 64), prolonged habitual and persistent learner absenteeism could have deleterious effects in the child's later life. Absenteeism does not only negatively impact effective professional practice of teaching and learning. Learners who are absent from school are at the greatest risk of dropping out of school early and becoming long-term unemployed as it is difficult, if not impossible, to secure a decent job without proper educational background (Bond, 2004).

Learners who drop out of school early also run the risk of being trapped in poverty. Such a learner in his/her adult life would much likely depend on welfare and social agencies for survival. Such learners also run the potential risk of being involved in crime, which would impact negatively on the justice system as it is very costly to maintain an inmate (Bonzos, 2005: 21). Regular school attendance is of utmost importance for learner's education and their social skills development. It is evident that non-attending learners are placed at a disadvantage socially and academically. Such learners miss critical stages of interaction and development with their peers and likelihood of academic progress and their success is compromised. The absent learner's lack of academic success breeds low-self-esteem, social isolation and dissatisfaction that can trigger learner absenteeism (Bond, 2004: 178).

2.4 Summary

The literature review reveals that the problem of truancy is not unique to developing countries in Africa. It is a global phenomenon that cuts across many nations. Management should motivate employees in order to increase morale among them and this will increase performance. The literature reviewed in this study was relevant in that it brought out specific factors that can link truancy among learners and academic performance. However, the gap in the literature review was presented in that most of the studies were related to stress among teachers and not specific to truancy and its effects on student academic performance. Other literature reviewed presented gaps in that they focused only on students' truancy behaviors without assessing their effect on academic performance.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter gives a description of the procedures that were used in conducting the study. The chapter then describes the research design that was employed, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, research instruments, data analysis as well as data interpretation. It also describes the ethical issues that were considered during the data collection exercise.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a mixed method design. Mixed methods research has been defined as a philosophically underpinned model of inquiry combining qualitative and quantitative models of research so that evidence may be mixed and knowledge is increased in a more meaningful manner than either model could achieve alone (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). This method of inquiry was most suited for addressing the research aims of this proposal. The philosophical rationale that compels mixing of qualitative and quantitative models of research into a single study is pragmatism. Simply put, pragmatism is the belief in doing what works best to achieve the desired result. As an underlying philosophy for inquiry, pragmatism supports researchers in choosing between different models of inquiry as research questions being addressed intrinsically determine which methods are best suited (Morgan, 2007). That is, certain research questions are best addressed using qualitative method while others using quantitative methods. The pragmatic philosophy underpinning this study allowed for a systematic application of appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods to address each specific research objective.

3.2 Target Population

The Target population is referred to as the entire sources of information a researcher employs to guide a research (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Borg and Gall (1979) further observed that a target population refers to all the members of a hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which we wish to generate the results of our research. The total population of possible respondents was hundred twenty three (123) as per human resource registers in the three selected schools. The target

population for this study consisted of teachers, Deputy Headteachers and Headteachers from three selected boarding secondary schools in Namwala District.

3.3 Sample

An important consideration in sample design is the choice of sample size. Anderson (2008) postulates that the best choice usually involves a trade-off between cost and precision. It is further noted that large samples provide greater precision but are more costly. With this view in mind, the sample consisted of fifty-five (55) respondents. These respondents comprised of forty-nine (49) teachers, three (3) Deputy Headteachers and three (3) Headteachers from three selected boarding secondary schools in Namwala District. The sample was determined using Taro Yamane Method (Yamane, 1967).

Below is the mathematical illustration of Yamane Method:

$$n = N / (1 + N \times (e)^2)$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = total population (123)

e = margin error (0.1)

$$n = 123 / (1 + (123 \times 0.1^2))$$

$$n = 55$$

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The sampling techniques employed in the study were convenient and purposive sampling techniques. Convenient sampling is a technique that selects respondents in view of availability and willingness to participate in the study. In this research, teachers from the selected boarding secondary schools in Namwala District were conveniently selected depending on their willingness to participate in the study. In the study, Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers were purposively sampled. Purposive sampling was favoured for participants who were selected based on some pre-defined characteristics that make them the holders of the data desired for the study (Maree, 2010). The study made use of homogeneous purposive sampling that aims to achieve a homogeneous sample; that is, a sample whose units or participants of the study share the same characteristics or

traits. In this study, headteachers and deputy headteachers were purposively samples since they were deemed to be holders of information needed by the researcher.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Kothari (2004) defines a research instrument as a tool or device chosen by the researcher to collect the required information. The research instruments that were used in this study are the semi-questionnaire and the semi-structured interview guide to collect data from the 55 purposively and conveniently selected participants. All participants were required to answer specific questions related to the topic of study.

3.5.1 Semi-Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from all the participants of the study. Open and closed ended questions were designed in order to solicit data from the participants. Kothari (2004) defines a questionnaire as a list of mimeographed or printed questions that is completed by or for a respondent to give his opinion. The main advantage and reason why the researcher opted for this tool is that large amounts of information can be gathered with relative ease.

3.5.2 Interview

Due to the descriptive nature of the study, semi-structured interviews were very instrumental in examining the responses of the participants on truancy and academic performance among learners at boarding secondary schools in Namwala District. Maree (2010) posits that interviews are a valuable source of rich descriptive data which helps to understand the participant's construction of knowledge and social reality. In this kind of interview, the interviewer asks questions, some structured and open-ended ones, or makes comments intended to lead the respondent towards giving data to meet the study objectives (Khan and Best, 2009). For this study, face to face encounters took place between the interviewees and the researcher. By use of a semi-structured interview guide, the researcher had a more precise goal of gaining an insight into the topic of study. This research instrument was used because there was need to collect more specific and detailed information from the participants in order to facilitate comparison of the reactions of different participants. Semi-structured interviews were the main source of qualitative information.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

According to Merriam and Simpson (1995), a data collection procedure is a process of finding data on the research. Primary data was collected using personal semi-structured interviews. In this study, the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews provided flexibility to the interviewees by not limiting them in the way they answered the questions as asked by the interviewer. To start the data Collection Procedure, appointments were made with the school administrators for interviews and administration of questionnaires in the three selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District. Consent from participants was obtained and a conducive time for data collection was agreed upon by the participants and the researcher.

In this study, questionnaires were first distributed among the participants of the study, for collection of data on the level truancy in the selected boarding secondary schools in Namwala District, and on a later scheduled date, the researcher collected the questionnaires and conducted the semi-structured interviews with the target participants of the study. The researcher chose to use interview technique so as to directly obtain information from the participants. The interviews were conducted with fifty-one participants of the study namely, teachers, Deputy Headteachers and Headteachers from three selected boarding secondary schools in Namwala District. The interviews were held at the respondent's convenient place and time. For the Headteachers and the Deputy Headteachers, the interviews were conducted in their respective offices while the school premises were used as interview site for teachers. In order to capture all the information from the interviews, the researcher made use of a sound recorder.

3.7 Data analysis

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006) data analysis is the stage where the researcher interprets the information collected from the respondents. This information is systematically presented. The information is coded and presented in order to help readers and the researcher to easily discuss the findings. Firstly, for qualitative data, the researcher read through the handwritten notes and voice recordings taken from the participants. Furthermore, the researcher identified the structure of the data collected. This step encompassed putting the data into themes or relating data to the questions under investigation. This step helped to put together the questions and objectives of the study, and to group them into large data sets. This step was imperative since the coding of data is done at this stage. The coded data was then grouped and developed into themes and sub-themes. This study

employed thematic analysis to analyse qualitative data. Major themes were drawn from the structured interviews with respondents. Descriptions of each theme was done, analysed and interpreted critically and objectively. For quantitative data, the use of statistical software such as SPSS to analyse quantitative data was adopted.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Beauchamp and Childress (2001), define ethical considerations as appropriate ways to treat and protect human beings, both fully functioning adults and vulnerable human beings. The collection of data was done systematically by first seeking permission from relevant authorities in charge of the places under study. In this study, the measures undertaken to ensure compliance with ethical issues included keeping the identity of participants' confidentiality by informing them that their names would not be included in the study. Therefore, all respondents in this study remained anonymous. In addition, during research, respondents' responses were neither interfered with nor contested by the researcher. Informed consent was obtained from both the respondent and the people in charge of the places where the research was to be carried out. In this regard, the proposal was also subjected to the Chalimbana University ethics committee for clearance. Lastly, all the participants received equal treatment regardless of their social status.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has explained the methodological design used in this study. A mixed approach was used in order for the researcher to interact with the Headteachers, Deputy Headteacher and teachers who were the holders of the information needed to carry out a conclusive study on truancy and academic performance in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala district. The study employed the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Overview

The present chapter presents and analysis the findings of the study on truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District of Zambia. The findings presented in the study were based on the responses to the questionnaire and interviews with the participants conducted by the researcher.

As highlighted in Chapter One, the study sought to find answers to the following specific questions:

- i. What is the level of truancy among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District?
- ii. What challenges are faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District?
- iii. What is the relationship between truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District?

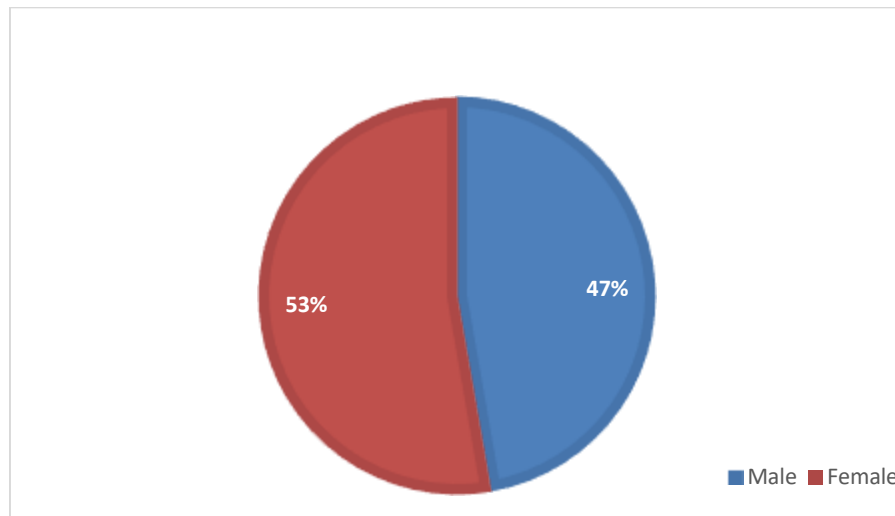
4.1 Characteristics of respondents

This section presents the background characteristics of some of the key respondents in the study. The information include sex, age, level of education, years of working experience of respondents and staff category.

a. Sex

The figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents of the study according to gender.

Figure 2. Gender distribution



The figure 2 shows that female respondents were represented by 53% while 47% of the respondents represented male respondents. Therefore, in terms of gender, there was a fair representation of the respondents.

b. Age

The figure 3 shows the distribution of respondents of the study according to their age brackets:

Figure 3. Respondents' age brackets

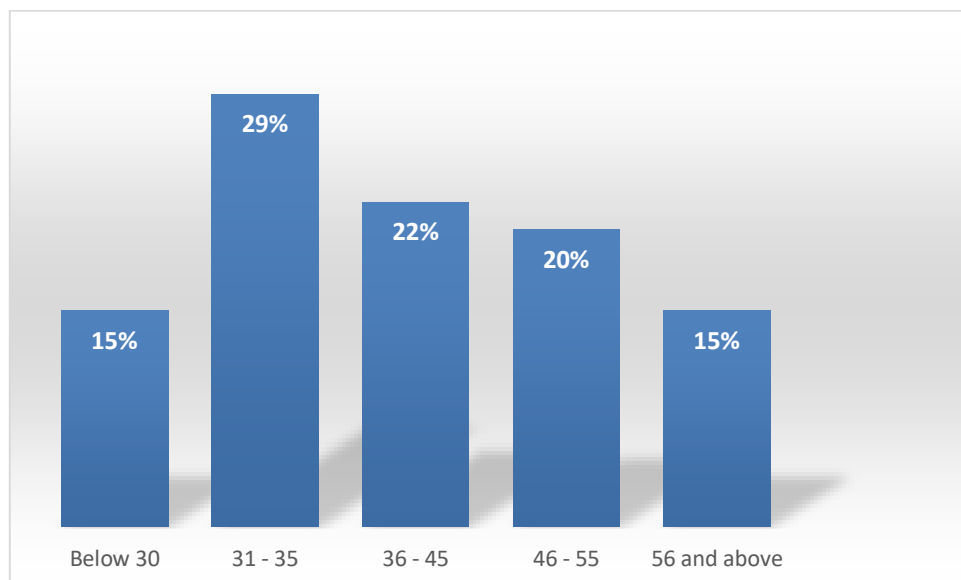
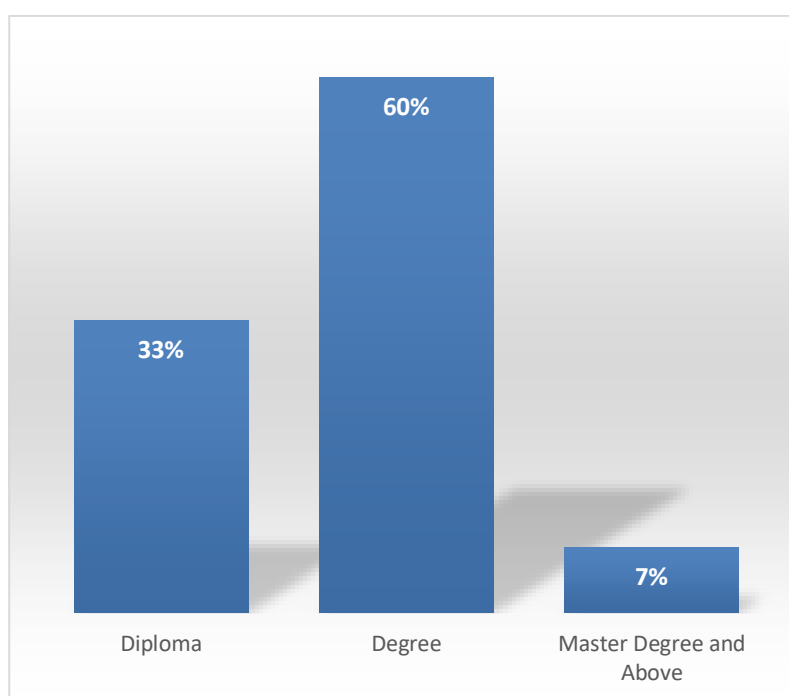


Figure 3 shows the age distribution of respondents. The majority of respondents were of ages between 31 and 35 representing 29%, followed by those aged between 36 and 45 representing 22% while those between 46 and 55 represented 20% of the respondents. Furthermore, respondents below the age of 30 and those above the age of 55 represented 15% for each grouping.

c. Level of education of respondents

The figure 4 shows the distribution of respondents of the study according to their level of education attained.

Figure 4. Respondents' level of education

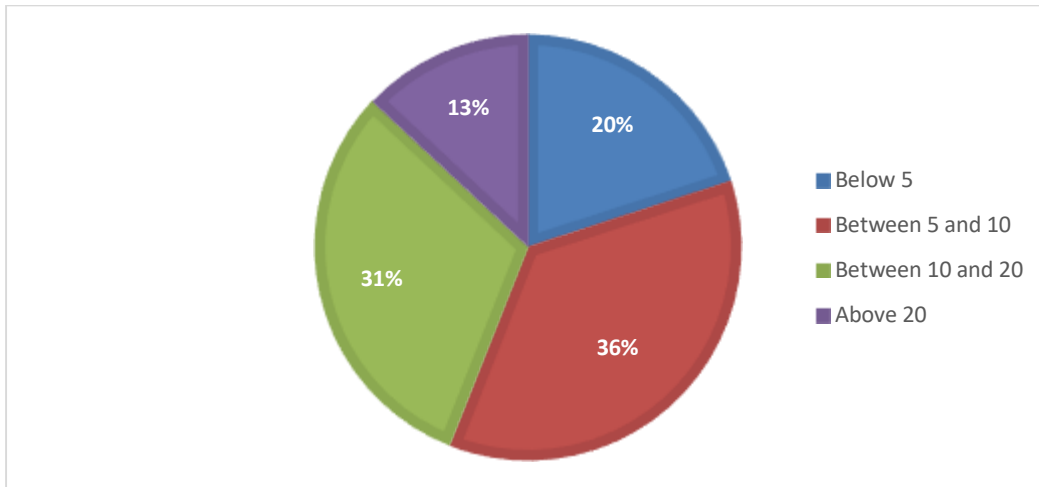


In this study, the majority of the respondents, representing 60%, were categorised as having attained degree level of education followed by 33% with diploma. Respondents with master's degree and above represented 7% of the respondents.

d. Years of working experience of respondents

The figure 5 shows the distribution of respondents of the study according to their years of working experience at the boarding secondary schools under study:

Figure 5. Respondents' work experience



The figure 5 shows that the majority of respondents (36%) had a work experience of between 5 and 10 years, followed by those with work experience of between 10 and 20 years, representing 31% of the respondents. Those with work experience of below 5 years represented 20% while 13% of respondents represented those with work experience of above 20 years.

e. Staff category of respondents

The figure 6 shows the distribution of respondents according to their staff categories in the organization.

Figure 6. Respondent category

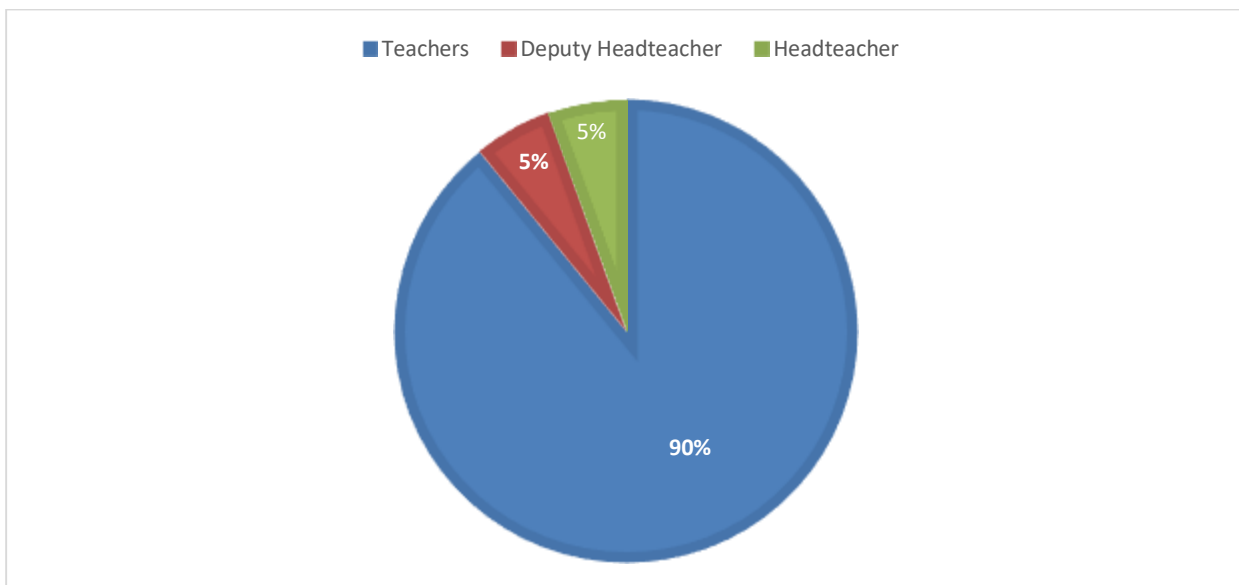


Figure 6 shows the staff categories of respondents where 90% represented teachers while 5% represented deputy Headteachers and another 5% represented the Headteachers. These categories are according to the target population and sample of the study.

Having presented the demographic characteristics of the study participants, the next section presents the results of the study. The results obtained for each of the objectives and their corresponding questions that were investigated are presented separately.

4.2 Level of truancy among learners

The researcher sought to assess the level of truancy among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala District under study.

To do that, the respondents were asked, firstly, to indicate if truancy was high among learners in their schools. Figure 7 shows the responses as recorded through the questionnaire.

Figure 7. Level of truancy among learners

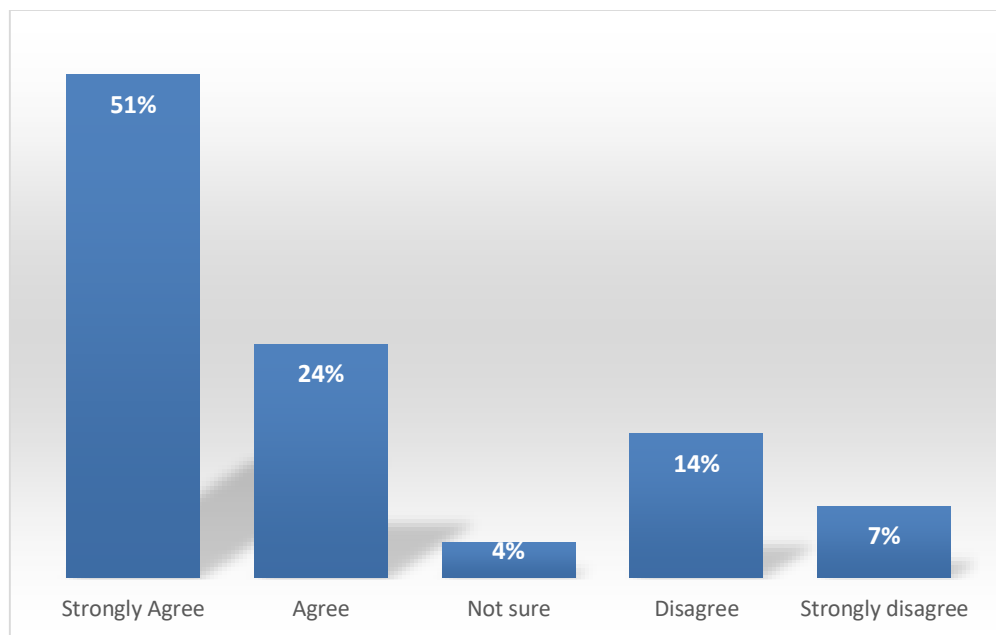


Figure 7 presents the statements that evaluated the social factors that influence the attendance of the respondent. For statement “Truancy is high among learners” 51%, 24%, 14% and 7% strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively while 4% of the respondents were not sure. The total Agreement and Disagreement to the statement was 75% and 21% respectively.

The response from the participants of the study shows that they were in agreement that truancy was high in their schools.

Secondly, the researcher sought to find out if the level of truancy in schools could be attributed to school level factors or family level factors. Participants of the study, by use of a questionnaire, were asked to indicate whether the levels of truancy were as a result of school level or family level factors. Figure 8 shows the responses.

Figure 8. Factors attributing to truancy

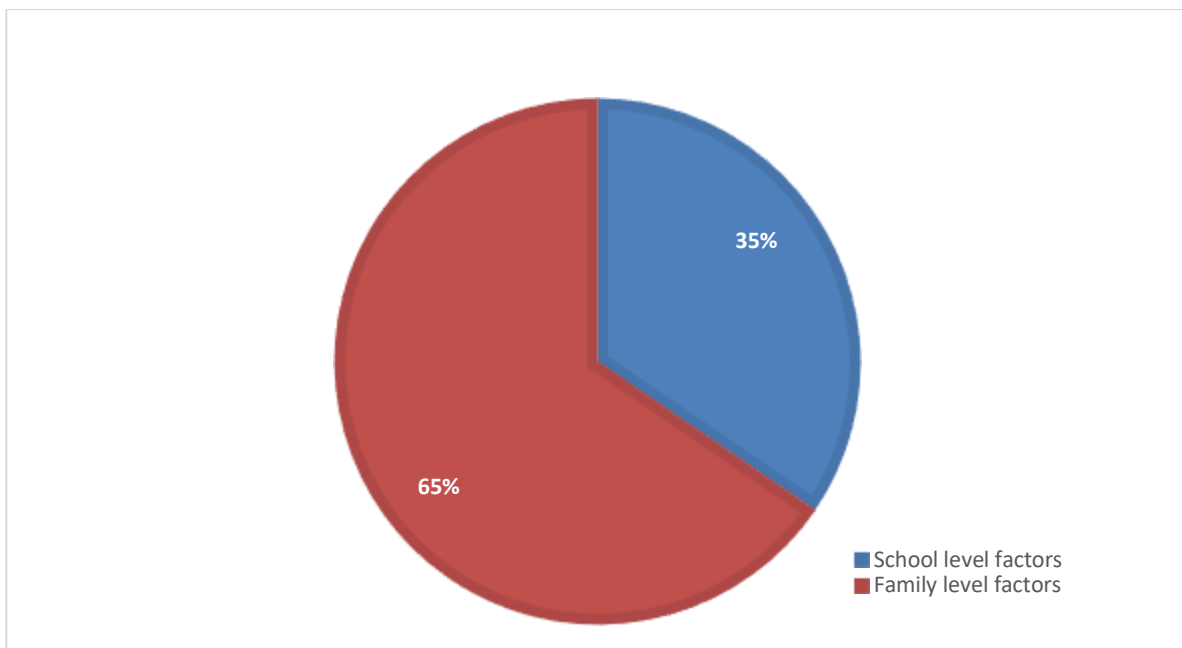


Figure 8 shows that 65% of the respondents indicated that truancy among learners in schools was attributed to family level factors while 35% were of the view that it was attributed to school level factors. This shows that the family level factors has a greater impact on learners attendance and truancy among learners than school level factors.

4.3 Challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners

The researcher sought to find out the challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners in the selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala district. By use of semi-structured interviews, the researcher solicited answers from the participants of the study. The emerging

themes from the study included poor curriculum coverage, challenge on executing lesson plans, poor understanding of subject contents and challenges in fostering discipline.

4.3.1 Poor curriculum coverage

The respondents of the study were asked to indicate what challenges teachers were facing as a result of truancy among learners. Poor curriculum coverage emerged as one of the predominant themes during the interviews. One of the Headteachers, **A**, had this to say:

Of course, we have a very huge challenge when it comes to truancy among learners. It is one of the most degrading challenges we face in as much as teaching and learning is concerned. Looking at how important it is to cover the whole curriculum for each academic year, truancy is a huge draw back because it is also not enough to finish the curriculum if some learners are absent and do not fully understand the concepts. It is therefore an issue which needs to be addressed by every stakeholder in education.

A deputy Headteacher, **C**, contributed by saying:

Truancy brings about a number of challenges to us teachers. We regard coverage of the curriculum of utmost important but it becomes challenging when learners keep absenting their classes.

One of the teachers, **M**, had this to say:

The biggest challenge that I have faced in my teaching job is truancy among learners. It is very retrogressive when it comes to planning for the classes in order to cover the whole curriculum. Truant learners are always behind and fail to understand certain contents of classes they missed and so it takes the teachers to go back and forth teaching the same things just to make sure that the class is moving at the same page.

Another teacher, **H**, mentioned that:

Covering the topic becomes a huge task when learners keep absenting the planned classes. Remember, planning for classes has a time frame attached to it

and so it becomes very difficult when you have to go back to old content just to make sure that truant learners understand.

4.3.2 Challenge on executing lesson plans

When asked on the challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners, the majority of the respondents believed that truancy posed a challenge in executing lesson plans. One of the respondents of the study, a teacher, **F**, had this to say:

Lesson plans are an undisputed element in the provision of quality teaching and learning. However, executing what we plan for in class becomes a challenge when we have a number of truant learners. This is because we always have learners who do not understand the content of some of the classes they absented. This has made it very difficult for us to move with our plans and be able to fulfil them as expected. Therefore, truancy is one of the determining factors of quality teaching and learning in a class.

Another teacher made mention that:

Indeed, truancy has been and will continue to be one of the greatest challenges we will be facing in our teaching practice if it is not addressed. In the face of truant learners, executing lesson plans has become a very big problem. We make lesson plans with the hope of executing them but given the truancy levels in our schools, it becomes only an academic exercise.

A deputy Headteacher, **G**, added that:

We are all very clear about how the teaching and learning process is supposed to be carried out. There always have to be lesson planning which is expected of every teachers meaning to give a quality instruction in class. However, we also note that repeated absenteeism poses a very big challenge to our lesson plans given the situation where plans have to be perfectly executed. Therefore, truancy does not do any good to us the teachers and the learners together.

4.3.3 Poor understanding of subject content

The study also revealed that the respondents of the study sampled from selected boarding secondary schools revealed that they believed that teachers faced the challenge of poor understanding capacity of subject content by most truant learners. One of the teachers, **K**, had this to say in an interview conducted by the researcher:

One of the greatest challenges we face as teachers in our quest to deliver quality education is to make our learners understand the concepts as taught. However, learners who abscond classes tend to have a slow learning capacity and this poses a very huge challenge. Capacity to learn, I believe, I build overtime with more class challenges and problem solving tasks. Therefore, the more a learner is not involved in learner centered tasks of the class by reason of being absent, it becomes a very big problem to understand concepts in higher grades.

Another teacher, **D**, has this to say:

Firstly, I must say that teacher-learner time is very important in the development of learning capacity in a student. Therefore, as a school, we have always sought to engage with our learners with as much time as we can in order to foster the development of infallible learning abilities. But, our greatest challenge has been absenteeism that is exhibited among most of the learners for various reasons, be it school based or home based. We face a lot of problems when it comes to having truants understand basic concepts which would help them in the higher grades. Therefore, this scourge is for everyone to fight so that we have a responsible group of learners who will consequently be responsible citizens and professionals.

To add to that, Teacher, **P**, said:

The other challenge we have as teachers is to make our pupils understand the concepts, first time. Understanding of the concepts in the curriculum content is very vital, however, it is something that needs dedication of time from the teacher as well as the pupil. Therefore, in times when pupils miss classes for no apparent reason, it becomes very difficult for them to grasp concepts in order to be ready

for final examinations. This now poses a huge challenge in trying to make our students understand after missing vital points in missed classes.

4.3.4 Challenges in fostering discipline

Regarding challenges in fostering discipline, the study revealed that truancy among learners posed a challenge on teachers aiming to foster discipline. Here are the responses from various respondents of the study:

Making reference to the rise in disciplinary cases in the school, Headteacher, **B**, put it this way:

We often deal with a number disciplinary cases at our school and one of the things we have noted is that most truant students are always found wanting. I am meant to believe that truancy can be the root of most of the undisciplined behaviors that we have seen in the past. There is always a rise in the cases when truancy is on the rise in our school.

A deputy Headteacher, **E**, also added that:

We always face challenges with repeated truant children when it comes to discipline. We, as teachers, have a very big role to play when it comes to fostering discipline in all the pupils we receive in our classes and we consider it our responsibility to help some parents with disciplining their children when they are within the confines of the school. However, when the same pupils are always missing classes, it becomes a challenge to instill discipline in them, thus, the kind of problems we are facing today.

One of the teachers, **H**, also added that:

Our role as teachers does not only end at class instruction. It goes beyond that and we believe we can be the second parents when it comes to checking the behavior of our learners. As much as we are interested in the learning process of our learners, we are also interested in developing responsible citizens and professionals of our society. Therefore, we are here to shape our learners to follow the good path in their personal development. But, truancy has proven to be a great challenge to us and my fellow teachers.

Another teacher, **T**, was of the view that:

Fostering discipline is one of the fundamentals of developing a responsible citizenry for today's and tomorrow's society. However, absenteeism brings about a lot of challenges where instilling discipline in our learners is concerned.

4.4 Relationship between truancy and academic performance among learners

The researcher also sort to assess the relationship between truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala district. According to the findings, the major themes that came out of the study included inadequate learning, loss of academic confidence as well as poor academic record.

4.4.1 Inadequate learning

The findings of the study revealed that truancy among learners led to inadequate time for teaching and learning. The participants of the study mentioned that the truancy interfered with the smooth running of the teaching and learning process in the selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala district. In this regard, one of the teachers, **Y**, had this to say:

Of course, truancy and academic performance are related in many ways. Truancy has a bearing on the class time for the truant learner. The more that a learner becomes a chronic truant, the more they lose out on time of instruction and therefore, that may lead to poor understanding of the curriculum content and consequently, low grades.

Another teacher, **U**, had this to say:

Yes, truancy is related to the learner's academic achievements. And this is because academic achievement is also related to the amount of time spent in class learning and understanding concepts. However, truant learners do not get to have enough time and thus making instruction time very inadequate. With a very compacted curriculum, it is very difficult to undertake recovery classes and so missing class affects the academic achievement.

Teacher, **MN**, added that:

Indeed, students need a lot of time in class in order to understand certain concepts. This is the reason why we have adopted student centered and problem solving approaches of class instruction so that our learners learn to solve problems on their own. However, truant learners miss out on such exercises and gives rise to inadequate learning, which has become a huge both for the student and for a teacher like me.

One of the Headteachers, **A**, added that:

Yes, we cannot run away from the fact that absconding classes has a negative effect on the teaching and learning process due to the limited time that the truant subjects him or herself to, in order to understand the contents of a particular subject. It is for this reason that we are trying by all means to ensure that we deal with this problem so that instruction time is not affected.

Another Headteacher, **D**, said:

Academic performance is a product of adequate learning time. However, truancy take away that classroom time from the student and this creates problems when it come to them grasping the concepts which have been missed. This is the reason why we are engaging with every interested party in education, especially the parents, to ensure that we deal with this problem, since we understand very well that chronic truancy is caused by both school and family factors.

4.4.2 Loss of academic confidence

The respondents of the study were also of the view that one of the relations between truancy and academic performance was that truancy led to loss of academic confidence by the learner. They mentioned that while there were a number of other factors that led to loss of confidence, truancy was seen to have a significant bearing on confidence. One of the respondents, a teacher, **N**, had this to say:

From my observation, truant pupils are never confident in their academic abilities. This loss of confidence, I believe, is brought about by their lack of

understanding of the class contents. Confidence is a very important elements that helps to a learner to achieve more in their academic journey. Therefore, our role is first to encourage such learners to attend classes and then build their confidence there on.

Another teacher, **S**, had this to say concerning loss of confidence:

Truancy leads to many things which consequently have a great bearing on one's academic performance. We have seen, as class teachers, how missing classes plays on the confidence of the learner. Truant learners are not confident in participating in classroom based tasks meant to improve students' problem solving skills.

A teacher, **FZ**, mentioned that:

Missing classes has a negative effect on the student's confidence at all levels of instruction. We know that confidence is one of the most important elements when it comes to academic achievement. However, it only comes when the student has mastered the contents of the study. However, missing classes does not help when it comes to mastering the content. It is for this reason that we, as teachers, are hoping that everyone involved in the education of a child, steps in to make sure that truancy does not continue.

One of the deputy Headteachers, **E**, added that:

Truancy also leads to having an unconfident class. Missing classes plays one the learner's confidence in their ability to solve classroom based exercises and projects. To pass the exam, confidence in one's ability and self-esteem are very important.

4.4.3 Poor academic record

During the study, by way of interviews, it was revealed that the truancy among learners ultimately resulted in poor academic record. The respondents were of the view that all other effects of truancy culminated in poor academic performance. One of the respondents, a teacher, **Q**, gave the following response:

You can never separate truancy and academic record. A student's academic record is a product of how much time they have had to understand the contents of the study and their readiness for the evaluations. However, students that miss classes do not have the necessary understanding of the content for them to score good grades in the examinations. I have seen how truancy and always been related to poor academic records during my ten years teaching experience at this school.

Another teacher, **G**, had this to say:

Academic performance is a product of an effective teaching and learning process. Students who score high marks in their continuous assessments have a good track record of attending classes against all odds. On the other hand, those that are fond of missing classes usually have very bad scored in their academic assessments. This is because academic record cannot be separated from the instruction time which many of the truants take for granted. Truancy therefore results in very bad academic records.

One of the teacher, **I**, also contributed that:

Missing classroom time has a very significant bearing on the academic achievement of a student at all levels of education. Students who abscond classes are most likely to have a very poor academic record. And this is evident from the classes that I have taught and I think it is true for other teachers as well. We usually have truant pupils who struggle to grasp the concepts due to the limited time they have to be instructed and to take part in classroom discussions and other student centered tasks.

Another teacher, **V**, had this to say:

It is very difficult for learners, especially slow learners, to have high scores when they are truant. Truancy always has a negative effect not only on the learner but also on us, the teachers. We cannot attain the pass marks of our students due to

truancy which also affects the whole class as a whole. Therefore, truancy and academic performance cannot be separated by any means.

Another teacher, **HD**, also added that:

We are always working tirelessly to ensure that our students score high marks in their exams, which paints a good picture, not only for me as a teacher but the school as a whole. The credibility of our education depends solely on the academic performance of our students. But, as a school, we are still having a huge challenge concerning truancy and how it is affecting the academic records of learners.

One of the Headteachers, **A**, mentioned that:

Academic performance of our students is of utmost importance and priority for us as a school. We know that the pass rate of our school is a determinant of the credulity and effectiveness of our teaching and learning process. We know we are facing a number of other challenges which lead to poor scores in examinations but truancy is one of the major causes. Truancy not only affects the learner, It also affects the teacher as well as other learners in the school. Therefore, it is something we must look at and find possible solution so that our schools will marked as high scoring schools.

Another Headteacher, **D**, added that:

Truancy is a big issue in most of our schools. Of course, learners miss classes or a variety of reasons, both school and family related, but the effects on truancy on the academic record of a student a devastating. Truant learners usually have problems maintaining a good academic record due to the lack of understanding of important concepts from the classes that they might have missed. We, as a school, are very delighted to have a very high pass rate as it has been in the recent past.

One of the deputy Headteachers, **E**, also added that:

We always not pleased with reports of students missing classes without any special reasons. This is because we understand how missing class is linked to having a very poor record in terms of student assessments. Truancy has a great bearing on the students' academic achievement, and this is the reason why we have to do everything possible to ensure that our learners have sufficient classroom time so that we give an opportunity to all our learners to learn and understand all contents of the curriculum.

Another deputy Headteacher, C, added that:

We are working tirelessly, as school, to ensure that we record high pass rates year by year by dealing with the challenges we face. Like you have mentioned, truancy is one of the biggest problems we are facing, and yes there is a very big and notable relationship between truancy and poor academic performance of the learner. Truant learners have very limited time to understand the contents of the classes and so it is very hard for them to have a good academic record compared to other learners.

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented the findings of 55 informants, comprised of Teachers, Deputy Headteachers and Headteachers from three selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala district. Themes that emerged from the analysis were presented, resulting in a detailed account of the level of truancy among learners, then the challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners as well as the relationship between truancy and academic performance. The next chapter discusses the findings of the study in accordance with the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Overview

This section discussed the findings as presented in the previous section. In this chapter, like the preceding chapter, data has been organized and discussed according to the sequence of the three objectives of the study starting with the level of truancy among learners, the challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners and the relationship between truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala district.

5.1 Level of truancy among learners

The findings of the study regarding the level of truancy among learners in the selected boarding secondary schools under study revealed that truancy was high, stating from the study that showed that the majority (75%) supported the statement that it was high. This implies that teachers and managers of the schools under study were facing challenges of truancy among their learners. The findings of the study are consistent with Echebiwe (2009) who in study found out that truancy behavior among students was at an alarming rate. Truancy is an educational, social and law enforcement problem. Learners' non-attendance to classes is a problem that extends much further than the school. It affects the students, the family and the society on very high levels. Globally, truancy has been identified as the most powerful predictor of delinquency and indiscipline among youths (Siziya, *et al.*, 2007). Truancy is increasingly observed as an evolving and emergent problem which is a delinquent act of a student to miss one or more classes intentionally. All over the world, truancy has been considered as a cankerworm that destroys the fabrics of the educational programmes which has instigated a number of hindrances and obstruction for the secondary school students in their educational career.

The study also resonates with the findings by Kwon Hoo (2003) who stated that truancy continues to be one of the growing problems that educators identify amongst learners. Truancy has raised concerns and this is evident by some of the initiatives undertaken by the national governments. It is understood that if truancy is left unaddressed, truancy is bound to contribute to innumerable problems for young people during the school years and into adulthood. Attempts are made to

ensure that learners attend school regularly. Various systems and procedures are in place at schools to record attendance. In Zambia, all schools are compelled to record the attendance of learners in class registers on a daily basis in order to keep track of learners' attendances. On the other hand, schools are at liberty to devise additional measures for keeping and monitoring attendance records and certain schools do checks in order to track absence during lessons. Despite these recording and monitoring procedures, learners continue to play truant on an almost daily basis and this is a major challenge.

The findings of the study also revealed that family level factors had a greater effect on the truancy of learners as compared to school level factors. The findings are consistent with Wilcox (2003:59) who emphasizes the link between non-involvement in single parenting and misbehavior, and also elaborates further on the aspect by discussing the process she regards as "parental monitoring". Another family variable that has been found to contribute to truancy is unstable family relationships, which include, divorce, parental separation and marital conflicts. When the relationship between parents breaks down, there is a likelihood that children will live with one parent or in an extended family structure. Hence, it was found that few truants are living with at least one biological parent. The recent increasing trend towards one-parent families also manifests as the result of other factors, such as death, teenage pregnancy or single parenthood by choice.

Parental involvement is very vital in the child's education and lack of it affects the child's academic commitment. Parental involvement is an intentional act whereby a parent makes an effort to relate and interact with the child. Parental involvement includes monitoring and helping with homework, attending school conferences and functions and providing a supportive learning environment. When parents experience problems in their own lives that are related to intimate relationships and other external factors, they tend to focus less on their children. This can eventually lead to less involvement or a total lack of interest in the children, and subsequent problem behavior. Lack of parental interest, support or involvement in the learner's education is also associated with truancy and many truants receive little or no parental support and encouragement (Reid, 2002). Parents of truants are less interested in their children's schoolwork and encourage competency in children to a lesser extent. According to Hall (2002:1), learners tend to do better at school and come to class prepared when parents pay attention to their homework and actually ensure that homework is done.

5.2 Challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners

The study also sought to find out the challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners. According to the findings of the study, it was cited that truancy among learners gave rise to poor curriculum coverage, challenge on executing lesson plans, poor understanding of subject contents and challenges in fostering discipline. In terms of poor curriculum coverage, the participants of the study were of the view that the time factor played a very huge role in covering the objectives of the curriculum. One of the participants of the study said that:

Looking at how important it is to cover the whole curriculum for each academic year, truancy is a huge draw back because it is also not enough to finish the curriculum if some learners are absent and do not fully understand the concepts. It is therefore an issue which needs to be addressed by every stakeholder in education...

The findings are in agreement with the determinations of Okuom *et al.* (2012) who found out that truancy by both the teacher and the students played a major role in non-coverage of the syllabus. Kiveu and Mayo (2009) similarly attest to the role of absenteeism on curriculum coverage. This implies that instruction time is very important for the teacher to cover the contents of the curriculum. However, most of the countries, it shows that students are often taught for only a fraction of the intended number of hours. Normally, instructional time is wasted through informal school closures, teacher absenteeism, delays, early departures and poor use of classroom time.

A curriculum is the sum total of resources intellectual and scientific, cognitive and linguistic, textbook and adjunct resources and materials, official and unofficial that are brought together for teaching and learning by teachers, students and in the best case community, in classrooms and other learning environments. Curriculum is simply what is taught and learned in schools (Kelly, 2004). It is the very constitutive cultural and scientific ‘stuff’ of education that is “transmitted” by the message systems of instruction and assessment. The syllabus, or official curriculum documentation, is a bid to shape and set the parameters of the curriculum, in a particular place and time. As a decade of research on the enacted curriculum tells us, the official curriculum document cannot, by its very definition, contain and express, control and micro-manage what goes on in the classroom. So it might constrain and enable certain practices and processes and not others but the written document is never the same as the lived experience of the curriculum constructed and

enacted by teachers and students in classrooms. The execution of the curriculum and syllabi is a process that needs the dedication of both the teacher and the learner. Therefore, truancy poses a challenge to teachers who are seeking to cover the contents of the curriculum in a specified time.

Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers faced challenges as a result of truancy on executing lesson plans. The participants of the study were of the view that truancy posed one of the greatest challenges in the classroom arrangement to execute the objectives of a particular lesson. One of the respondents mentioned that:

Indeed, truancy has been and will continue to be one of the greatest challenges we will be facing in our teaching practice if it is not addressed. In the face of truant learners, executing lesson plans has become a very big problem.

These findings are in line with Stronge *et al.* (2011) who argued that truancy is one of the hindrances to effective planning by teachers and remains one of the greatest challenges faced by teachers in the teaching and learning process. This implies that truancy has a negative effect on teacher effectiveness. The public has also come to believe that in order to improve education the quality of teachers must be upgraded. Therefore, a lot of pressure has been put on school to ensure teachers are effective. It is clear that some teachers are more effective than others. The differences in effectiveness, however, can have a startling impact on students. Determining a teacher's effectiveness can be a difficult proposition with the school culture being a nested system and the extraordinarily large number of variables that impact students on a daily basis. However, effective teaching has everything to do with having a teacher that follows the teaching standards, such as lesson planning and execution.

Effective teaching is a product of planning and preparing, including components such as knowledge of content and pedagogy, knowledge of students, setting instructional outcomes, demonstrating knowledge of resources, designing coherent instruction, and designing student assessments. Effective teaching also includes the practices of maximizing instructional time, understanding the importance of instruction, communicating expectations for student achievement, and planning for instructional purposes, implementing Instruction, including the practices of using and adapting instructional strategies with regards to student need, understanding the complexities of teaching, using questioning techniques and supporting student engagement.

Execution of lesson plans is of utmost importance in progressive instruction. Formal lesson planning is a legitimate and necessary instructional activity according to most educators and researchers. However, formal planning is what is most commonly associated when the term lesson planning is used. This involves the consideration of multiple aspects of the classroom, ranging from methods to engage the students in the material to the different ways students may react. Although there are many different kinds of planning that teachers do which serve many functions in the classroom, daily lesson planning has been identified as one of the most important types of planning (Omstein & Lasley, 2004).

In addition to planning for a variety of instructional strategies, the amount of time learners spend engaged in the act of learning also impacts student achievement. The teacher needs to not only plan these strategies but plan the implementation so that the learners' time with the material is maximized. Omstein & Lasley (2004) state that when planning, enough time should be allocated to the lesson so that "demonstration can be complete, the students can discuss what they have observed, students can reach conclusions and apply principles they have learned, students can take notes or write about the demonstration, and materials can be collected and stored. Therefore, the greatest challenge that teachers face in order to execute the lesson plans is the time factor in the face of truant learners.

The findings of the study further revealed that truancy among learners posed a challenge of poor understanding of subject contents. The participants of the study believed that one of the greatest challenges they faced with truant learners was their ability to understand concepts related to the subjects. One of the participants mentioned that:

The other challenge we have as teachers is to make our pupils understand the concepts, first time. Understanding of the concepts in the curriculum content is very vital, however, it is something that needs dedication of time from the teacher as well as the pupil. Therefore, in times when pupils miss classes for no apparent reason, it becomes very difficult for them to grasp concepts in order to be ready for final examinations.

The findings of the study are consistent with Weiss and García (2018) who affirmed that missing school has a negative effect on performance regardless of how many days are missed. In fact, when

one misses a single topic, it will affect their understanding of subsequent topics. However, the more days of school a pupil misses, the poorer their academic performance will be.

When learners are truant, they miss out on consistent instruction that is needed to develop basic skills for the understanding of the curriculum, making it very challenging for the teachers to instruct effectively. Learners are particularly susceptible to falling behind in some fundamental and conceptual skills, which can have a snowball effect that impacts future learning. Learners who have learning and thinking differences can be especially vulnerable to the impact of truancy because missing classroom time reduces opportunities for any interventions that might be necessary.

Lastly, the findings of the study revealed that teachers faced challenges with fostering discipline in truant learners. Participants of the study were of the view that they had the responsibility of disciplining the learners when they are within the confines of the school. However, truancy posed a huge challenge in fostering discipline. One of the participants of the study had this to say:

We, as teachers, have a very big role to play when it comes to fostering discipline in all the pupils we receive in our classes and we consider it our responsibility to help some parents with disciplining their children when they are within the confines of the school. However, when the same pupils are always missing classes, it becomes a challenge to instill discipline in them, thus, the kind of problems we are facing today...

The findings of the study are in line with Salgong *et al.* (2016) who stresses that teachers and school administration have the responsibility of ensuring that students matures steadily along his own personal line. Discipline problems in schools and institutions are perhaps the single greatest cause of concern for educators globally. Discipline is consistently identified as serious school problem in public opinion. A culture of discipline is very important for the academic success of the school. It is therefore very important for teachers and school administrators to have all the learners yield to the standards of discipline without exception. However, truancy has proven to be a problem when it comes to instilling a common culture of discipline.

Commitment, on the part of school managers and teachers, to establishing and maintaining appropriate student behavior as an essential precondition of learning. Well-disciplined schools

tend to be those in which there is a school-wide emphasis on the importance of learning and intolerance of conditions which inhibit learning. In contrast to poorly disciplined schools, staff in well-disciplined schools share and communicate high expectations for appropriate student behavior. A warm social climate, characterized by a concern for students as individuals, is typical of well-disciplined schools. Teachers and administrators take an interest in the personal goals, achievements, and problems of students and support them in their academic and extracurricular activities. In view of this, truancy is a hindrance when it comes to having a culture of discipline.

5.3 Relationship between truancy and academic performance

The researcher also sought to assess the relationship between truancy and academic performance. Emerging themes regarding to this research question included inadequate learning, loss of academic confidence as well as poor academic record. According to the study, it can be established that there is a relationship between truancy and the academic achievement of the learner. To start with, truancy leads to inadequate learning due to loss of instruction time on the part of the learner. One of the participants of the study highlighted the difficulties that learners face in understanding the content of the study in limited instruction time, he said:

...we cannot run away from the fact that absconding classes has a negative effect on the teaching and learning process due to the limited time that the truant subjects him or herself to, in order to understand the contents of a particular subject...

The findings of the study are in line with Eastman *et al.* (2007) who indicated, in their study, that truancy results in loss of other students' time since teachers must use additional time to compensate, which leads to lost teaching time for all students. Direct and indirect costs of absenteeism are extremely high to the individuals, schools, families and communities. First of all, absenteeism in school negatively affects student learning experience and academic achievement. Absenteeism reduces the success because students miss their education time. This implies that even when teachers achieve very high levels of time for learning and opportunity to learn, ultimately the students decide how much time they will actually spend on their school work and how much opportunities to learn they will actually use. Schools need an adequate number of days and hours for instruction and well-trained teachers to deliver quality lessons, so that student engagement and learning is maximized.

Many schools of thought have propounded that 'time' is an intangible resource and one of the major features of human development. In fact, it is said that time is a non-renewable resource and effective use can be considered to be one of the indicators of the socio-economic development. According to Dowden (2011), time is strictly finite and cannot be increased so one has to look at its use closely. Thus, instructional hours are vital to enhance both the teaching and learning processes. Royelli (2011) opined that a key educational resource which provides a good foundation to support efforts in improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools is the way time is used as an instructional tool. This therefore suggests that Headteachers and stakeholders in the educational sector at large should put pragmatic measures in place to see to the efficient and effective use of instructional time to foster and enhance the academic performance of students. Likewise, the researcher concludes that truancy on the part of learners has a telling effect on students' academic performance.

The findings further reveal that truancy affects the academic confidence of the learner which in turn affects the learner's academic achievements. Participants of the study were of the view that truancy causes loss of confidence on the part of the learner. One of the participants of the study mentioned that:

This loss of confidence, I believe, is brought about by their lack of understanding of the class contents. Confidence is a very important elements that helps to a learner to achieve more in their academic journey...

The findings of the study are in line with the assertion of Malcom *et al.* (2003) who mentioned that poor attenders suffered a loss of confidence due to the fact that they are unable to understand the work. Truant behaviors are more likely to cause low self-confidence in the learner. The relationships between self-confidence and academic achievement have received much attention. One's sense of worthiness and competence enhances academic achievement. However, this is one element that lacks in truant learners. Self-esteem and academic achievement seem to be most highly related. Academic self-confidence is a crucial variable which influences motivation and preference of the students on school tasks. It means where students have confidence in their academic abilities, they tend to invest more effort in completing tasks. Contrary to this, those who see themselves as having inadequate abilities tend to show little patience or preference when difficulties are encountered.

Academic self-concept, therefore, acts as a functionally limiting factor in their cases, thus probably to restrict the extent to which academic achievement may vary. Considering the above, it is concluded thus that achievement scores may be influenced by students' cognitive abilities as well as by their perception of those abilities. Marsh & Hau (2003) have also argued that non-cognitive variables such as confidence are important aspects of academic achievement, while the rules of cognitive abilities and previous learning opportunities should in no way be underestimated. Truant learners, however, tend to lose their confidence due to their lag in understanding the contents of the classes which in turn affects their academic performance.

The study also revealed that the relationship between truancy and academic performance was that truancy resulted in poor academic record. The majority of the participants of the study affirmed that truancy had an effect on the academic track record of the learner. One of the respondent of the study said:

Truant learners usually have problems maintaining a good academic record due to the lack of understanding of important concepts from the classes that they might have missed...

The findings of the study resonates with (Bantu, 2003) who highlights that truancy is bound to influence somehow their academic performance and achievements stating that those students who absent themselves from regular instruction for whatever reasons, miss important knowledge and competencies. He adds that some negative implications of truancy include loss of learning opportunities, poor academic performance and eventual dropout. Maynard et al. (2013) perspectives are not different from the findings of the study when they reasoned that low academic achievers quit schooling because they cannot cope with the low esteem arising from their low performance or repeat class for better academic achievement. This has the implication that truancy has a direct effect on the academic achievement trajectory of the student.

This also indicates that when learners have better attendance rates, they often have higher passing rates on standardized achievement tests. Truancy relates with future negative learning outcomes such as slower progression and lower achievement in later years. School attendance can influence academic outcome throughout a student's school life. Also, poor school attendance may also have serious implications for the academic growth of learners. This is in consonance with Attendance

Works (2014) that reiterates that chronic absence and school dropout positively influence slow academic progression and class repetition in high school.

As it is also clear that school absenteeism and poor academic performance are significant problems that have considerable long term negative consequences. In response to the numerous negative effects of school truancy, many schools across different nations have incorporated truancy intervention programs. These programs often involve intensive work with students and their parents to minimize environmental factors contributing to truant behavior. Problematically, these programs generally are initiated only after students have lost valuable learning time.

Parents play the fundamental role in the education of their children. This applies to every family regardless of the parents' station in life, their income, or their educational background. Nobody else commands greater influence in getting a young person to go to school every day and recognizing how a good education can define his or her future. For families and schools to work together to solve problems like truancy, there must be mutual trust and communication. Many truancy programs contain components which provide intensive monitoring, counseling and other family-strengthening services to truants and their families. Schools can help by being family-friendly and encouraging teachers and parents to make regular contact before problems arise. Schools may want to consider arranging convenient times and neutral settings for parent meetings, starting homework hotlines, training teachers to work with parents, hiring or appointing a parent liaison, and giving parents a voice in school decisions.

5.4 Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the study in line with the research objectives. It first discussed the level of truancy among learners, then the challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners as well as the relationship between truancy and academic performance. From the key findings, it was established that truancy levels were high in the selected schools under study. Furthermore, the study found out that teachers faced challenges in the face of truancy in ways such as poor curriculum coverage, challenge on executing lesson plans, poor understanding of subject contents and challenges in fostering discipline. Lastly, the findings of the study revealed that truancy and academic performance were critically related.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Overview

The previous chapter discussed research findings on truancy among learners and academic performance in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala district. The study gave a comprehensive report on the level of truancy in the selected boarding secondary schools, the challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners and the relationship between truancy and academic performance. In this chapter, conclusions drawn from the investigation are also outlined. In addition, recommendations and suggestions for future research based on the findings of the study are given.

6.1 Conclusion

Truancy can cease immediately to pose a problem of academic performance and development of skills for employment. After all, truancy to a large extent is an offshoot of misplaced values. Truancy affects the absent learner, but also negatively impacts on the teacher's ability to teach effectively. Failure to present classroom instruction in a sequential manner affects the teacher's ability to plan and present classroom instruction in a logical and organized way. To understand the relationship between truancy and academic achievement, the study aimed to assess truancy and academic performance among learners in selected boarding secondary schools of Namwala district.

Regarding the first objective, it can be concluded that the level of truancy in boarding secondary schools are high. Further, it can be concluded that family level factors have a more significant influence on the learners' truant behavior than school level factors. Regarding the second objective, it can be concluded that poor curriculum coverage, challenge on executing lesson plans, poor understanding of subject contents emerged as challenges faced by teachers as a result of truancy among learners. Furthermore, truancy brought about challenges to teachers in fostering discipline in learners in order to instill a culture of discipline in the school.

Regarding the third objective, it can be concluded that inadequate learning, loss of academic confidence as well as poor academic record settled the argument of the relationship between truancy and academic performance. This implies that truancy led to inadequate instruction time, loss of confidence and poor academic record which ultimately affected the academic performance of the learners.

6.2 Recommendations

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

- It is recommended that the learners should be enlightened on the importance of school learning and proper use of time in school and at home by their teachers, parents and stakeholders.
- It is recommended that school Headteachers and teachers are advised to ensure an encouraging, friendly and facilitated environment inside the school for their students to reduce their truant behavior. Further, they should properly correspond and communicate with parents of students on their activities and performance.
- Compulsory school attendance rules and interventions should be made by all affected schools.

6.3 Suggestion for Future Research

There is still little agreement on the effect of truancy on academic performance though several studies are being conducted. On this note therefore, other studies need to be conducted in different parts of Zambia so that a generalizability of findings can be made.

Furthermore, considering the limitations of the study, it is recommended, therefore, that a study in future be undertaken to determine the contribution of the school environment on the truancy levels of learners.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire for all respondents of the study

CHALIMBANA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH, POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AND CONSULTANCY

Dear Respondent, I am **Violet Mwansa**, a student of Chalimbana University currently undertaking a research entitles: *Truancy and Academic Performance in Secondary Schools: A study of selected Secondary Boarding Schools of Namwala District, Zambia*. The study is in partial fulfilment of the academic requirements for Award of Degree of Master in Education Leadership and Management. This questionnaire is purely for academic purpose and the information provided shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. I kindly request you to spare a few minutes and fill this questionnaire as genuinely as possible. Thank you.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Indicate answers to questions by ticking in the boxes provided
- For the sake of confidentiality, do not write your name on the questionnaire

Part 1: Personal Information

1. Sex: Male Female

2. Age Range:

Under 25 years

Between 25 and 35 years

Between 36 and 45 years

Between 46 and 55 years

Above 55 years

3. Level of Education:

- Diploma
- Degree
- Masters

Other (Indicate)

4. Years of working experience.

- Below 5 years
- Between 5 and 10 years
- Between 10 and 20 years
- Over 20 years

5. Staff Category:

- Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Teacher

Part 2: Level of Truancy among Learners

1. Truancy is high among learners in our school? *Tick your answer.*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

2. Do you attribute truancy to school level factors or family level factors? *Tick your answer.*

- School level factors
- Family level factors

THANK YOU

Appendix B: Structured Interview for all respondents

CHALIMBANA UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH, POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AND CONSULTANCY

Dear Respondent, I am **Violet Mwansa**, a student of Chalimbana University currently undertaking a research entitled: *Truancy and Academic Performance in Secondary Schools: A study of selected Secondary Boarding Schools of Namwala District, Zambia*. The study is in partial fulfilment of the academic requirements for Award of Degree of Master in Education Leadership and Management. These interviews are purely for academic purpose and the information provided shall be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. In your capacity as a Headteacher, deputy Headteacher or teacher, is truancy among learners an issue of much concern in your school?
2. What challenges are teachers facing as a result of truancy among learners at your school?
3. What is the effect of truancy on learners' academic performance?
4. Do you have anything else to say?

THANK YOU