# PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS AS CORRELATES OF TRUANT BEHAVIOUR AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTH WEST, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*The study examined Psycho-social factors (emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment) as correlates of truant behaviour and academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. two objectives were stated and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested. The study adopted correlational survey research design and the population of the study was three hundred and forty thousand and seventy-eight (340,078) students. The sample size was one thousand five hundred and thirty-two (1532) senior secondary year two (SS2) students. Multi-stage sampling procedure and six instruments were used for data collection. Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS), School-based Stress Questionnaire (SBSQ), Social Skills Questionnaire (SSQ), Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ), Truant Behaviour Questionnaire (TBQ) and English Language Performance Test (ELPT). The instruments were adapted and validated by experts in Test and Measurement and Educational Psychology, Federal University Dutsin-Ma. The reliability of the instruments were at 0.852 for Emotional Intelligence Scale, 0.845 for School-based Stress Questionnaire, 0.771 for Social Skill Questionnaire, 0.859 for Social Adjustment Questionnaire and 0.842 for Truant Behaviour Questionnaire respectively, meanwhile, Cronbach" Alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficient of English Language performance test and a reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained. The researcher used multiple regressions to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. However, the findings revealed that there was a significant combined influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on truant behaviour among secondary school students in North, West Nigeria which indicated (42.3%) $R^2 = .423$, $F = 32.532$; $p<0.05$, and also there was a significant combined influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria which revealed (83.2%) $R^2 = .832$, $F - 36.714$; $p<0.05$. It was concluded that emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment correlates to truant behaviour and academic performance and based on the findings, it was recommended among others that government should develop a system that will identify and support students who are at risk of truant behaviour and poor academic performance and teachers should seek support from colleagues and collaborates with other counsellor to address the issue of truant behaviour and improve academic performance.*

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills, social adjustment and  truant behaviour

## Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right and a crucial factor in social and economic development. It equips individuals with knowledge, skills and values necessary for personal growth and active participation in society. Ensuring universal access to quality education remains a significant challenge

in many parts of the world; including Nigeria. However, Psycho-Social Factors refer to the dynamic interplay between psychological processes and social contexts that influence individual behaviour and well-being. According to Oxford Dictionary (2022), Psycho-social means pertaining to the influence of social factors on an individual's mind or behaviour, and to the interrelation of behavioural and social factors. Based on this study, the Psycho-Social factors are emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment.

Emotional intelligence which is one of the psychological factors in this study refers to a critical aspect of human interaction and personal development. It encompasses the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively utilize one's own emotions of others. However, emotions give the way to present how we behave and feel in situation. Emotional intelligence is the phenomenon under study during the last two decades. Goleman (2010) in the book stated that emotional intelligence matters twice than IQ in defining the success of an individual. The emotional intelligence base perception is that individuals should have a clear awareness of their feelings and can deal with the emotions in a real way. Education plays the main part in increasing emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2010).

One of the variables under psychological factors in this study is school-based stress.  School-based stress is the anxiety that comes from schooling and education. It refers to the pressure experienced by students to perform well in any given examination. It involves mental distress regarding anticipated academic challenges, failures and awareness of the possibilities of academic failure. During school days, academic stresses may show in any aspect of the child's environment; be it home, school, neighborhood or friendship. There are lots of stresses related to studies which occur due to imbalance of academic and social performance and management of time for extracurricular activities from education. Academic stress is found maximum among those students who cannot balance their academic activities, family, friends and social activities of their life. Student's stress depends a lot on their relationship with teachers, pressure to perform well in the examination, completion of school work on a limited time period as well as school environment. Involvement of students in co-curricular activities such as debate, quiz, speech, music and dance, arts, helps to level down the stress and improve the performance of students in school. (Hetrick & Parker, 2020).

In addition, another variable to be considered under social factor in the study is social skills. Social Skills involve examining how individuals interact, communicate, and behave in social institutions. It encompasses various aspects such as verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy active listening, conflict resolution, and understanding social cues. Social skills are explained as an assumption of a wholesome social life, which are essential in pursuance of personal sovereignty, ability to adapt to social situations, to express themselves and understand others, to communicate avoiding conflicts, to maintain good interpersonal skills, social skills are an important condition for a harmonious existence in a social group, a possibility for an individual to act effectively in a social environment, and an assumption of a successful socialization (Osit, 2018 & Hembrought, 2017).

Social factors is social adjustment. Social adjustment is an effort made by a person to cope with the demands or challenges of a new environment. It includes the individual's involvement in social activities and satisfaction with various aspects of experiences. In the process of social adjustment, the individual tries to behave in accordance with the norms, ethics, and values that will enhance his survival, and meeting the social expectations of the environment. Different individuals have different social adjustment abilities. When individuals are able to adjust effectively in a new environment, it enhances their optimal performances physically and intellectually. In the school, parental control of students ceases, and the student is confronted with both new freedom and challenges. The school is a new environment that can trigger different reactions among students.

Another variable in this study is truant behaviour among students includes lateness to school and class, leaving school before closing time, loitering, dodging lessons and absenteeism (Brooks, 2011). However, absenteeism is a high rate of absence from school by students when regular attendance is needed. Students indulge in truant behaviour as a means of escaping from an unpleasant situation that causes fear or avoiding school to gain freedom. Truant behaviour has been identified as a challenge

among students in schools globally and in Nigeria in particular (Animashaun, 2012). Truant behaviour is a deliberate irregular attendance at school. Similarly, truancy it is observe that is the failure of an absentee student to obtain permission from parents and school. Truant behaviour occurs if a student is absent without an excuse from parent/guardian or school. Truant behaviour is an anti-social behavior of students who stay away from school (Eremie, 2015).

Academic performance of students refers to the student's ability to complete academic assignments, and it is assessed using objective criteria such as final course grades and grading point average (Carroll, & Garavalia, 2014; Naser, & Hamzah, 2018; Olivier et al., 2019). Many scholars have identified several factors that affect a student's academic achievement (Kim et al., 2018; Lei, 2018). In this day and age of globalization, increasing economies, and rapid development, improving educational output and retention rates is critical to the prosperity of any nation.

## Statement of the Problem

Despite effort to improve academic performance, many students continue to exhibit truant behavior, leading to a significant negative impact on their academic performance and overall educational experience and more so it is worrisome to note that students tend to face a lot of psychological and social problems arising from irregular school attendance, lack of personal and interpersonal skills to cope with school work. Truants have negative perception about schooling because it interferes with their freedom as they prefer to spend most of their time with friends. However, many students struggle with personal issues that relate to lack of personal, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, which manifest as behavioural problems that could most likely result to truancy. Truants suffer from deprivation, isolation, rejection and unassertiveness, which is due to their inability to cope with social, cognitive and problems-solving skills. Some of them are bullied hence they decide to be absent from school unknown to their parents and the school authority.

The realization of the goals of secondary education as spelt out in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) is not farfetched. It includes rising up a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others and dignity of labour. The goals of the policy therefore cannot be effectively achieved with the menace of truancy ravaging the educational system. Hence, the present study examined the psycho-social factors such as emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment in order to ascertain the outcome of students' academic performance in English Language as a subject that is offer by every student among senior secondary school students in North West Nigeria. There is a gap in literatures on how to improve on regular school attendance and improve English language performance and does not account for other factors that might influence the relationship between emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment as correlates of truant behaviour such as socio-economic status, family support and also lack of theoretical framework which does not ground the problem in a specific theoretical perspective. Therefore, this study focused on student's emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment as correlates of truant behaviour and academic performance in North West Nigeria.

## Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study are:
1. Toinvestigate the combine influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.
2. To investigate the combine influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

## Hypotheses

These hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

$H0_1$:    There is no significant combine influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

$H0_2$:    There is no significant combine influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social

skills and social adjustment on academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

## Methodology

This study adopted Correlational survey research design. Correlational survey allows researchers to predict behaviour or events Smith (2011. The population consists of three hundred and forty thousand and seventy-eight (340,078) SS II students. The sample size of this study is one thousand five hundred and thirty-two (1532). This is in line with the Research Advisor (2006) table of sample which indicates this number as sample for the above population. However, the sampling technique that was used is Multi stage sampling technique and proportionational for the selection. The instrument used for this research work was an adapted closed ended questionnaire tiled Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS), Schol-Based Stress Questionnaire (SBSQ), Social Skills Questionnaire (SSQ), Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ), truant behaviour questionnaire (TBQ) and Engligh Language Perfoamance test (ELPT). The questionnaire was made up of four likert scale which is strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The research instrument was validated by expert from the department of educational psychology and counselling, FUDMA. Pilot study was conducted in order to determine the reliability cooefficient of the instruments. For the purpose of the study 100 students from Government secondary school, Bomo Kaduna State was used. The reliability of the instruments were established after test re-test reliability was used for the interval of two weeks, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed which yielded 0.852 for Emotional Intelligence Scale, 0.845 for School-based Stress Questionnaire, 0.771 for Social Skill Questionnaire, 0.859 for Social Adjustment Questionnaire and 0.842 for Truant Behaviour Questionnaire respectively, meanwhile, Cronbach" Alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficient of English Language performance test and a reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained. The researcher used multiple regressions to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## Testing of Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated were tested as follows:

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant combine influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

**Table 1: Regression Analysis showing the Analysis of Relative Combined Influence among Emotional Intelligence, School-Based Stress, Social Skills and Social Adjustment on Truant Behaviour**

**R=.765[a]**

**R** **Square** **=.423**

**Adjusted** **R** **Square** **=** **.181**

**Std. Error of the Estimate = 12.3242**

| Model | Analysis of Variance Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F-value | Sig. | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regression | 12201.452 | 4 | 3050.362 | | | |
| Residual | 143272.920 | 1528 | 93.765 | 32.532 | .000[b] | S |
| **Total** | 155474.372 | 1532 | | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Truant Behaviour.
b. Correlates: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence, School-Based Stress, Social Skills and Social Adjustment.

**S: Significant at 0.05 alpha level of significance**

The analysis on table 1 revealed that, the combined independent variables (emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills & social adjustment) since the multiple R coefficient indicated 0.765, P<0.05, while the $R^2$ coefficient was 0.423. This was significantly contributed 42.3% to the total variance in truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West Nigeria, was attributed to the joint effect of Goal orientation, Emotional Intelligence, Creativity while the remaining 57.7% of the regression of the unexplained variance was due to other factors not considered in the regression model. The table indicated the F-calculated value as ($R^2$ = .423, F =32.532; p<0.05). Therefore, hypothesis one is rejected. In other word, 42.3% of the variation in truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria can be explained by the combined influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment.

This means that there is significant relative combined influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. This implies that, emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment correlates to truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

**Table 2: Test of significant of Regression coefficient Variance**

| Model | Un-standardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Standard Error | Beta | t-value | Sign. |
| (Constant) | 17.881 | 2.109 | | 8.477 | .000 |
| Emotional Intelligence | .096 | .030 | .092 | 3.201 | .001 |
| School-Based Stress | .453 | .028 | .385 | 16.077 | .000 |
| Social Skills | -.250 | .034 | -.260 | -7.360 | .000 |
| Social Adjustment | .089 | .034 | .085 | 2.604 | .009 |

a. Dependent Variable: Truant Behaviour, (P<0.05)

The result on table 2 shows the relative importance of each of the correlate variables (emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment) to the correlation of Students' truant behaviour as showed by the co-efficient of Beta weight which ranged from -0.250 to 0.453. From the table, school-based stress with a Beta weight of 0.453 (45.3%) shown to be the single most potent correlate of truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. This followed by emotional intelligence with Beta weight of 0.096 (9.6%), social adjustment with Beta of 0.089 (8.9%) and social skills with Beta weight of -.250 (-25%) showed to be single least correlates variable of truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. The table also revealed that the standard errors ranged from 0.028 to 0.034, the standard errors of school-based stress is 0.028, emotional intelligence is 0.030, social skills and social adjustment are 0.034 having equal standard error for un-standardized coefficientsof regression.While on the other hand, the standardized coefficients, the Beta weight range from -0.260to 0.385, social adjustment has a weight of 0.085 (8.5%), emotional intelligence 0.092 (9.6%), social skills -0.260 (26%) and school-based stress 0.385 (38.5%). Thet-values ranged from -7.360 to 16.077, at P<0.05. The t-value for social skills (-7.360), social adjustment (2.604), emotional intelligence (3.201) and school-based stress (16.077) at P<0.05 level of significant showed to have produced significant effect and correlates of truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria, therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the results show the independent variables (emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment) are correlates of the dependent variable (truant behaviour) among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant combine influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis showing the Analysis of Relative Combined Influence among Emotional Intelligence, School-Based Stress, Social Skills and Social Adjustment on Academic Performance**

R=.832[a]
RSquare=.692
Adjusted R Square = .201
Std. Error of the Estimate = 8.678

| Model | Analysis of Variance Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F-value | Sig. | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regressio | 9045.742 | 4 | 2261.436 | | | |
| n Residual | 94118.688 | 1528 | 61.596 | 36.714 | .000[b] | S |
| Total | 103164.430 | 1532 | | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Academic Performance.

b. Correlates: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence, School-Based Stress, Social Skills and Social Adjustment

**S: Significant at 0.05 alpha level of significance**

The analysis on table 3 revealed that, the combined independent variables (emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills & social adjustment) since the multiple R coefficient indicated 0.832, P<0.05, while the $R^2$ coefficient was 0.692. This was significantly contributed 69.2% to the total variance in academic performance among secondary school students in North West Nigeria, was attributed to the joint effect of Goal orientation, Emotional Intelligence, Creativity while the remaining 32.8% of the regression of the unexplained variance was due to other factors not considered in the regression model. The table indicated the F-calculated value as ($R^2$ = .692, F =36.714; p<0.05). Therefore, hypothesis one is rejected. In other word, 69.2% of the variation in academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria can be explained by the combined influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment.

Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is significant relative combined influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. This also implies that, emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment correlates to academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

**Table 4: Test of significant of Regression coefficient Variance**

| Model | Un-standardized coefficients B | Standard Error | Standardized coefficients Beta | t-value | Sign. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 30.387 | 2.095 | | 14.508 | .000 |
| Emotional Intelligence | .143 | .030 | .149 | 4.829 | .000 |
| School-Based Stress | .019 | .028 | .018 | .697 | .486 |
| Social Skills | -.109 | .034 | -.122 | -3.218 | .001 |
| Social Adjustment | -.054 | .034 | .056 | -1.587 | .113 |

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Academic Performance, (P<0.05)

The result on table 4 shows the relative importance of each of the correlate variables (emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment) to the correlation of Students' academic performance in English Language as showed by the co-efficient of Beta weight which ranged from -0.054 to 0.143. From the table, emotional intelligence with a Beta weight of 0.143 (14.3%) shown to be the single most potent correlate of Students' academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. This followed by social skills with Beta weight of -0.109 (10.9%), social adjustment with Beta of 0.054 (5.4%) and school-based stress with Beta weight

of 0.019 (1.9%) showed to be single least correlates variable of Students' academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. The table also revealed that the standard errors ranged from 0.028 to 0.034, the standard errors of school-based stress is 0.028, emotional intelligence is 0.030, social skills and social adjustment are 0.034 having equal standard error for un-standardized coefficientsof regression.While on the other hand, the standardized coefficients, the Beta weight range from -0.122to 0.149, emotional intelligence has a weight of  0.149 (14.9%), social skills -0.122 (12.2%), social adjustment 0.056 (5.6%) and school-based stress 0.018 (1.8%). Thet-values ranged from -3.218 to 4.829, at $P<0.05$. The t-value for social skills (-3.218), social adjustment (-1.587), school-based stress (0.697) and emotional intelligence (4.829) at $P<0.05$ level of significant showed to have produced significant effect and correlates of Students' academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria, therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the results show the independent variables (emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment) can influence and correlates of the dependent variable (Students' academic performance in English Language) among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

**Summary of Findings**

From the above data analysed and interpretation of the results, the following findings emerged;

1. That there is significant relative combined influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. This also implies that, emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment correlates to truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

2. That there is significant relative combined influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. This also implies that, emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment correlates to academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

**Discussion of Findings**

The analysis in hypothesis one indicated the significant combined influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. The finding was supported by the finding of Abdullah et al, (2015) who found that relationships between emotional intelligence (EI) and truant behavior, the result indicated that revealed a negative linear relationship between EI (r= −.208, n= 300, p= .001) and DB, implying that adolescents with better EI had lower levels of delinquency. Multiple regression analysis revealed that EI is a significant predictor of DB and self-awareness is the main factor of DB. This study contributes to the knowledge of the importance of EI in understanding truant behavior and  EI can be used to identify and discriminate emotional skills among those adolescents who exhibit truant behaviour. Addressing the role of EI as correlates to probably prove to be effective in reducing truant behaviour. The study focused on the relationships between emotional intelligence (EI) and the truant behaviour of the students. The finding contradicts the finding of Kumar et al (2020) who found that high levels of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment can actually negatively impact academic performance. The study suggested that excessive focus on these factors can detract from academic achievement. However, Jiang et al (2015) who found that students who experienced high levels of school-based stress and had poor social skills tended to perform poorly in academics. The study also found that emotional intelligence and social adjustment did not have a significant impact on academic performance.

The finding in null hypothesis two indicated there is significant relative combined influence of emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. The finding was supported by the finding of Alberto et al, (2023) who found that western culture and explored that emotional

intelligence is a valuable variable to predict academic performance, as it was shown, to have a significant moderate-high effect size ( r =0.390 and p <0.001). In addition, although none of the regression models applied to moderate the variables that yielded relevant results, significantly differences was show between geographical regions and type of performance measured were detected. It is concluded that setting up programmes to stimulate emotional intelligence at the school level can improve the personal development of individuals and also their academic performance. The finding contradicts the finding of Jiang et al (2015) who found that high levels of emotional intelligence, school-based stress and social adjustment can actually increase truant behaviour. The study suggested that excessive focus on these factors can lead to decreased academic engagement and increase truant behaviour. The study of Rubin et al (2015) who found that students who experienced high levels of school-based and had poor social skills tended to exhibit increased truant behaviour. However, the study did found that emotional intelligence and social adjustment did not have a significant impact on truant behaviour.

## Conclusion

The study investigated emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment as correlates of truant behaviour and academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study the researcher concluded that there was a significant combined influence on emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment on truant behaviour and academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria. It also implies that that there was significant relationship between emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment and truant behaviour among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria and there was significant relationship between emotional intelligence, school-based stress, social skills and social adjustment and academic performance among secondary school students in North West, Nigeria.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were given based on the findings of the research.
3. Students should develop self awareness that will help them understand their emotions, strengths and weakness before making decision.
4. Parents should communicate with teachers on regular basis and talk to teachers about their children academic progress.
5. Teachers should encourage students reflection and self-assessment that will help students' set goals and take ownership of their learning.
6. Government should develop a public awareness campaign to highlight the importance of attendance and academic performance.
7. Educational psychologists should collaborate with teachers, administrators and policymakers to integrate emotional intelligence into educational policies.
8. Curriculum planners should infuse emotional intelligence into teaching practices and classroom management.

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