

## **LECTURES ABSENTEEISM AMONG UNDERGRADUATES: A CASE STUDY OF DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRAKA-NIGERIA.**

By

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated lectures absenteeism among undergraduate students of Delta State University Abraka, aimed at finding out the extent of lectures absenteeism among male and female students, identify the factors responsible and ascertain the motivational causes of lectures absenteeism. The study provided answers to three research questions. The sample of the study comprised 380 (male n=160 and female, n=220) randomly selected from four out of eight departments of the Faculty of Education of the university. Interview and questionnaire were the instruments for data collection. Statistical Package of the Social Sciences was employed for data analysis. The results obtained revealed that the lectures absenteeism was prevalent to a great extent. The factors responsible for lectures absenteeism were identified. The study recommends that the university should establish an attendance policy that would motivate perfect attendance and punish non attendance and chronic non attendance among students of the university.*

**Key words:** lectures, non-attendance, motivational factors, students.

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### **Introduction**

The university is an ivory tower meant for the empowerment of students with skills, knowledge, positive values and the where withal for living a useful life in the society. Students come to the university so that they can be transformed through education and training in character, knowledge and service to humanity. While at the university, students are nurtured by their lecturers who impart relevant skills, values, knowledge, competencies and other attributes essential for their maximal contribution to the development of themselves and their society. The university is aimed at producing finished products (students) who supposedly are excellent in research, learning, community service, as well as being innovative. A students' intellectual prowess and academic growth can be strengthened through regular attendance at lectures (Arulampalam, Naylor, and Smith, 2008). Students' lectures absenteeism has been an issue of major concern that is threatening the attainment of excellence in university education in Nigeria. Students especially at the undergraduate level regularly do not attend lectures. They skip lectures as they like and some even do not attend at all until semester examination commence.

When students do not attend classes regularly, the money paid for their education by their parents and wards as well as the instructional time is wasted. High rates of lectures absenteeism by students are likely to hinder or impede academic activities in the university. Lectures absenteeism has been considered a major problem by both staff and university administrators (Chong, Cheung, Hui, 2009; Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012). Researchers succinctly uphold that class attendance is likely to be beneficial for learning, irrespective of the specific mode or modes used by the instructor (Crede et al, 2010). Students learn more effectively and may perform academically better when they regularly attend lectures.

The level and extent of efforts students commit into attending lectures could impact positively on their academic performance.

Studies have linked students class attendance with their academic performance (Chen and Lin, 2008; Chen, 2008; Kirby and McElroy, 2003; Dolton et al, 2003; Bratti and Staolani, 2002; Rodgers, 2001; Marburger, 2001). Attendance in school is important because students are more likely to succeed in academics when they attend class consistently (Pascopella, 2007; Aden, Yahye and Dahir, 2013). Students, who stay away from school, spend their precious academic time doing other irrelevant things which often get them into trouble with the law of the society. Some of this group of non attendee get involved in criminal activities and are caught up with the law enforcement agents which make them to be put in jail. Some may end up not graduating from the institution and continue to cause problems in the society. This study investigates lectures absenteeism by Delta State University undergraduates.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study investigates non attendance of lectures among undergraduates of Delta State University Abraka with the specific objectives of finding out:

- i. The extent of lectures absenteeism among male and female undergraduates of Delta State University Abraka.
- ii. The factors responsible for lectures absenteeism among undergraduates of Delta State University Abraka.
- iii. Identify the motivational factors encouraged absenteeism among students of Delta State University Abraka.

### **Research Questions**

This investigation is aimed at answering the following research questions:

- i. What is the extent of lectures absenteeism among male and female undergraduates of Delta State University Abraka?
- ii. What are the factors responsible for lectures absenteeism among undergraduates of Delta State University Abraka?
- iii. What motivational factors encouraged lectures absenteeism among students of Delta State University Abraka?

### **Statement of the Problem**

The researcher observed during the course of her lecturing since over ten years the continued lectures absenteeism among undergraduates of Delta State University Abraka. The recurrent issue of lectures absenteeism, this undesirable attitude of students missing lectures have continued to be a serious issue in most discourse among academics. Some students do not even attend lecture once before semester examination commences. These categories of students were first seen in the examination hall during semester examinations. Worst still, the researcher observed that some of the students who do not attend lectures are staff children. Lectures absenteeism has not been given much attention in Nigeria and Delta State University Abraka in particular. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, most studies that have been conducted on lectures absenteeism were carried out in other countries of the world. Hence this study investigates lectures absenteeism among undergraduates of Delta State University Abraka, Nigeria. The limits of this research cover final year students of Delta State University Abraka, Nigeria who registered and wrote examination in two courses namely Comparative Education and Organization and Administration of Education during the 2015/2016 academic session.

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This study is hinged on cognitive evaluation theory propounded by Decci and Ryan (1980). This theory proposes that individuals have innate psychological needs for competence and self-determination in any environment they find themselves. This innate psychological need for competence and self-determination is the underlying basis for intrinsic motivation of the individual. In accordance to this theory, the effects of extrinsic motivational variables such as rewards which could be verbal, tangible, the setting of deadlines, engagement based and delivery of evaluation (Decci, Koestner, and Ryan 2001), depend on how the motivational variables are able to influence the individuals perception of competence and self-determination. Therefore people are intrinsically motivated to perform and continue to perform an action when the activities they would perform will make them feel competent and self-determining.

Decci and Ryan (1980) maintains that cognitive evaluation theory help to explain and predict changes in intrinsic motivation. This change in intrinsic motivation can take place through two processes namely the locus of causality and the perceived competence process. When individuals feel compelled to do something without being self-determined to engage in the activity intrinsic motivation will be decreased. But intrinsic motivation can be enhanced when the individual has opportunity for choice and self-determination.

In terms of lecture attendance, students may be motivated to attend lectures regularly for intrinsic or extrinsic reasons. Intrinsic motivation may decrease if students feel incompetent and overly controlled by their lectures and the educational structure. When this happens, some students may likely come to school motivated by extrinsic motivation inputs such as grades and future jobs. In addition, the extrinsic motivational incentives may not be appealing to some students who may decide not to attend lectures. They are neither motivated extrinsically or intrinsically to attend lectures.

Decci carried out his analysis using the Dene people of Indian. The Dene people appears to be constantly motivated to learn and master their environment. They want to be competent in all realms of their existence, provided the learning and growth must be self-determined, as they seek mastery and knowledge of their environment. The Dene native Indians also believe that knowledge must be discovered by them and not by imposition. Thus, at every stage of their life, they strive for competence and self-determination in relation to their environment. Hence they are highly intrinsically motivated. When they come to school for lectures, they want to have a say in their education. They prefer opportunities for choice and self-determination. When they realize that such opportunities are not provided to them, they lose their intrinsic motivation towards school and extrinsic motivational incentives at this time appears meaningless to them. They out rightly shun going to school and stop

### **Literature Review**

Lectures are an efficient way of delivering a large amount of complex information to university students (Arulampalam et al, 2008). For students to make good success in their academic activities, they must attend lectures regularly. Several studies have linked students' success rates to their attendance at lectures (Lukusa, Kaur, Kumari and Lyer 2015; Pascopella, 2007). Absenteeism can be detrimental to the learners' success in their learning (Nyamapfene, 2010).

Studies conducted on reasons for lectures absenteeism by Gomis-Porqueras, Meinecke, and Rodrigues (2011) revealed that increasing use of technology in teaching and learning process motivates absenteeism by students. Magen (2013) contend that the introduction of electronic lecture notes is a major deterrent to good attendance as it does not stimulate learners to attend lectures, thus promoting absenteeism. Massingham and Herrington (2006) and Gomis-Porqueras, Meinecke, and Rodrigues (2011) the main reasons for students' lectures absenteeism is the availability of materials online. Gomis-Porqueras et al (2011) also attributed students' lectures absenteeism to "out options" such as work, leisure

and social activities. Gosper, Green, McNeil, Philip, Preston and Woo (2008) conducted a survey on eight Australian universities. The results showed that 68.3% of students surveyed said that they could learn as effectively using digital audio recordings, as they could by attending lectures in person.

Holbrook and Dupont (2011) impersonal relationship between teachers and students in large classes acted as factors that predisposed students to absent themselves from classes. Study by Pathammavong (2011) found that female students were likely to be more absent from lectures than male students due to health problems. Most of the studies reviewed in this study were international studies. Class attendance is likely to be substantially influenced by contextual factors (Crede, Roch and Kieszcznka, 2010; Aurora, 2013). Such factors include attendance norms and perceived difficulty of the class. Other factors as outlined by Arlampalam, Naylor and Smith (2012) are intelligence, conscientiousness and motivation. Barlow and Fleischer (2011) noted that the short comings of the teaching were a potential factor that predisposed students not to attend class.

In Nigeria and Delta State especially Delta State University Abraka, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, lectures absenteeism by undergraduate students has not been given much attention. Hence this study examined lectures absenteeism among undergraduates of Delta State University, Abraka.

## **Methodology**

The research design used for this investigation is descriptive survey of the ex-post facto type. The study population comprised all undergraduates of the Faculty of Education Delta State University Abraka during the 2015/2016 academic session. Statistics of students' population in the eight departments of the faculty during the period of this investigation shows the total number of students as 4882.

Through the use of simple random sampling technique, a sample of 380 students who registered for comparative education and organization and administration of education (Edu 412 and Edu 411 respectively) were selected. The sample was selected from four Departments of the Faculty of Education namely Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, Departments of Guidance and Counseling, Departments of Human Kinetics and Health Education and Departments of Social Science Education. Male students were 160 while females were 220.

This study made use of both qualitative and quantitative sources for data collection from the respondents. The interview was used for the collection of qualitative data from the respondents. Twenty students were interviewed from each of the four departments selected for the study. The total number of students interviewed was eighty. The questionnaire was used for the collection of quantitative data from the respondents. Some of the interview questions were converted into questionnaire items for ease of qualitative data analysis. The questionnaire was sub divided into two parts. The first part focused on respondents' demographic information which bothered on department, gender, age and marital status. The second part contained thirty four items on likely reasons for lectures absenteeism. The items were structured following a five point Likert type scoring scale of strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree.

The validity of the instrument was conducted by subjecting it to expert judgments of two educationists who are Professors in the Faculty of Education of the university. They read through the items, scrutinized it and provided useful comments which were used to effect corrections on the instrument before the final copies were printed.

For the reliability determination of the instrument, Split-half reliability technique was employed. The instrument was administered to fourty students in 400 level in the other four departments of the Faculty of Education that did not participate in this study. This administration of the instrument was carried out twice within two weeks interval. Cronbach-Alpha technique was used in calculating the

reliability coefficients to obtain an index of 0.66. The reliability index implies that the instrument was internally consistent and hence it was used for the study.

The interview was conducted by the research and an assistant who is a lecturer in the department. The interview was within a period of one week. The interview took place about two weeks before the commencement of second semester examination. Those students to be interviewed were assured that they would be no punishment meted on them so they should feel free to express themselves. The quantitative instrument (questionnaire) was administered to the students during the examination period. The students were told the purpose of the study and assured that it is an academic research aimed at identifying reasons for students' lectures absenteeism. Three hundred and eighty copies of the questionnaire were administered but three hundred and sixty six copies were retrieved usable for analysis of data.

Data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package of the Social Science (SPSS) version 12.0 such as frequency distribution, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The student t-test of significant difference was employed in analysis of data to test the hypotheses. The level of significance was 0.05.

## Results

The results of data analysis is presented in tables below;

**Table 1: Extent of Lectures Absenteeism among Male and Female Undergraduates of Delta State University Abraka**

<i>Student Cohort</i>	<i>Courses</i>	<i>Attendance%</i>		<i>Non Attendance %</i>	
		<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
2015/2016	Comparative Education	65.14	78.31	34.86	21.69
2015/2016	Organization and Administration of Education	61.35	75.46	38.65	24.54

The result shows that during the 2015/2016 academic year for Comparative Education, 34.86% and 21.69% of non attendance was recorded for male and female students respectively. For Organization and Administration of Education, male students non attendance was 34.85% and female students was 24.69%. Male students were more absence from lecture than female students for the two courses by 10.16%.

**Table 2: Factors Responsible for Lectures Absenteeism among Students of DELSU**

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Factors Responsible for Non Attendance</i>	<i>Male Students</i>		<i>Female Students</i>	
		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
1	Motivational	.3.62	0.88	3.44	0.70
2	School related	3.42	0.55	3.00	0.91
3	Student/family related	.2.94	0.86	3.48	0.56
4	Lecturer related	3.52	0.52	3.60	0.45
	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	3.38		3.43	

From Table 2, the weighted mean score for male and female students are more than the cut-off 2.50 the cut-off mean score. Therefore both male and female students agreed that the factors responsible for lectures absenteeism are motivational, lecturer related, school related and student/family related.

**Table 3: Motivational Factors that Encouraged Absenteeism among Students of DELSU**

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Motivational Factors that Encouraged Lectures absenteeism</i>	<i>Male Students</i>		<i>Female Students</i>	
		<b>Freq Agree</b>	<b>Freq Disagree</b>	<b>Freq Agree</b>	<b>Freq Disagree</b>
1	I just hate going to class for lectures because it is always boring	68.66	31.34	65.22	34.78

2	Lecture is not always interesting to me	74.48	25.52	68.56	31.44
3	I don't just have the motivation to attend lectures	77.12	22.88	74.43	45.56
4	I am not capable of copying notes fast during lectures	56.33	43.67	60.43	39.57
5	I sometimes feel not competent in myself to cope with academic work during lectures	70.18	29.82	66.19	33.81
6	My negative self-concept about myself makes me not to attend classes regularly	67.12	32.88	59.43	41.56

From the result in Table 3, all the items 1-6 are the motivational factors that encouraged non attendance at lecture among male and female undergraduates of Delta state university.

## Discussion of Findings

### Interview Results

Forty non attendees were interviewed within a period of one week on the reasons why they do not attend lectures regularly. Six students explained that they missed classes because “they already have the course materials” which they collected from their predecessors who offered the courses last session. So they felt attending lectures was a “waste of time” fifteen students said they do not attend lectures regularly because the course lecturer “just dictates notes which is exact with the content of the recommended text book” so they did not see any reason to attend lecture since they have the text book. Eleven students said most of the lecturer tells stories not related to the course during lecture time so absconded from lecture because to them, attending lecture is a “mere waste of their precious time”. Eight students said the lecture was always “boring”. While seven students who were all males said they were engage doing some “other jobs” five students said they had no reason for not attending lectures.

For the first research question, the finding showed that the extent of lectures absenteeism was more with male students (33.65%) than female students (24.44%) for Comparative Education course and also more with male students (34.86%) than female students (28.69%) for Organization and Administration of Education course. Male students were more absent from lecture than their female counter parts by 9.21% and 6.11% for Comparative Education and Organization and Administration of Education respectively. This finding contradicts that of Pathammavong (2011) that female students were likely to be more absent from lectures than male students due to health problems

For research question two, the factors responsible for lectures absenteeism are motivational, lecturer related, school related and student/family related. For research question three, the motivational factors that encouraged non attendance at lecture among male and female undergraduates of Delta State University are 77.12% male and 74.43% female students expressed not being motivated to attend classes, 74.48% male students and 68.56% female students said lecture is not always interesting to them hence they do not regularly attend classes. 70.18% male students and 66.19% female students uphold that they sometimes feel not competent in themselves to cope with academic work during lectures. 68.66% male students and 65.22% female students expressed that they hatred attending lectures because it is always boring.

67.12% and 59.43% male and female students respectively expressed that their negative self-concept about themselves made them not to regularly attend lectures. 56.33% and 60.43% female students respectively said that not being capable of copying notes fast during lectures was responsible for their not attending lectures regularly. The finding of this study is in line with Massingham and Herrington (2006) that students' attitude and motivation were the most influence on attendance. They emphasized that motivational factors were stronger factors for students' missing lectures.



Motivation is the urge that pushes, directs or influence the effort an individual puts into performing a task (Asiyai, 2011). The motivation to perform any task must come from within the individual (intrinsic) or from outside the environment (extrinsic). In the case of lecture attendance, a student who is intrinsically motivated will try at all costs to be regular at lectures. Students who are not intrinsically motivated to attend lectures regularly, factors within the school environment could propel them to regularly attend lectures. These factors could be school related, student/family related and lecturers related. Students' self concept about themselves and feeling of incompetence in copying notes fast during lectures which they said made to miss classes are factors of intrinsic motivation.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined lectures absenteeism amongst students at the undergraduate level at Delta State University Abraka. Lecture attendance with respect to two final year education courses namely Comparative Education and Organization and Administration of Education was compared for male and female students. The study attempted to find out the extent of non-attendance between male and female students. The study was able to establish that non-attendance at lectures was more with male students than with their female counter parts for both courses. The study was also able to identify the factors responsible for non-attendance at lectures among students as motivational, school related, student/family related and lecturers related. Additionally, the study identified the motivational factors that encouraged non-attendance at lectures among students.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study recommends as follows:

- i. The authority of Delta State University Abraka should organize seminar and workshops on the importance of regular attendance at lectures for students.
- ii. The university should establish very strong attendance policy and ensure that such policy is fully implemented.
- iii. The university should consider rewarding perfect attendance by students so this can help motivate non-attendees to start attending lectures.
- iv. The university should consider implementing a policy of seriously monitoring lecture attendance by students.
- v. Lecturers should be empowered to implement the policy of 75% attendance before a student is allowed to write semester examination by ensuring that the list of students who meet up with attendance standards are published before the commencement of semester examination.

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