Absenteeism and Truancy among Senior High School Learners: A Framework for Action

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Abstract: *Absenteeism and truancy in school paralyzes the learning opportunity of the learners. Undoubtedly, teachers, parents, and other members of the learning community are affected by this problem. Hence, all stake holders in the learning community must be involved to address this perennial problem in education.*

In order to collect sufficient data, the researcher utlized TIMMS questionnaire to record and to analyze the demographic profile of the learners. Similarly, an unstructured interview method was used to find the antecedents and possible solutions to minimize absenteeism and truancy among the Senior High School learners at Teodora Alonzo High School. Results showed that learners with poor school attendance have socioeconomic issues. On the other hand, personal choice and influence from their friends and peers are the primary reasons of truancy among the learners in Senior High School.

Key Words: *absenteeism, social learning, truancy.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

"Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world."

This quote was once mentioned by one of the most influential transformational leaders of the 21st century, former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. This tells the people around the globe that education is an investment that an individual can make most out of his entire life. Through appropriate and adequate education, an individual who acquires it transcends his simple way of living into something that is more acceptable and justifiable based on the norms and mores of the society. Through his knowledge and skills, he can influence other people to make things beneficial for the common good of everyone. Likewise, he can devise solutions to the problems that exist in his community or make innovations to uplift the lives of the many. Thus, a positive change exists not only on the holistic growth of an educated person but also to other people whom he manages to have a social and intellectual interaction.

However, in most cases, schools around the globe are still experiencing one of the perennial problems in education – absenteeism and truancy among the learners in all levels. Absenteeism (also school avoidance or refusal) is defined as a truant behavior (Keter, 2013) wherein the student tends to be absent in school with or without valid reason (Lannegard-Willems, et.al, 2012) and such action is detrimental to his academic performance (Demin and Akman, 2016). On the other hand, truancy is an intentional, unacceptable and invalid action of staying away from school, skipping of classes, cutting classes or skiving off. Technically, it is an unexcused absence explicitly caused by students of their own free will (National Center for School Engagement, 2012) without parental affirmation and knowledge (Bell, et. al, 1994).

Studies showed that absenteeism and truancy is rampant among the learners within the age bracket of twelve to eighteen (12- 18) years old. The causes of absenteeism and truancy among the learners may be categorized into five broad categories, such as: personal, family-related, school climate, socioeconomic and influences from the environment. Experts believed that absenteeism and truancy has an adverse effect on the performance of the learner in school (Genteroy, 2016), his social and emotional behavior (Williams, 2010; Easeman, 2007), as well as various consequences (Balfanz and Brynes, 2012).

In terms of school performance, a person with poor attendance and manifests truant behavior for whatever reason it may be, has low academic performance in school. He can hardly cope up with the lessons, and school- based activities that will promote his holistic development. He usually encounters struggles in all lessons and cannot bridge the linkage of previous lessons to a new one. A performing learner may also be influenced by his friends and peers to refuse from going to school. He may manifest undesirable behavior such as going to places other school during school hours, drinking alcoholic beverages, betting and gambling, and hanging out with peers with common interest. Hence, the academic grades of the learner would be adversely affected by absenteeism and truancy.

Neuroscientists believed that emotion and cognition are interrelated processes. Emotions may bring understanding on the meaning of a significant lesson. According to Cohen (2005), a young individual who exhibits a healthy social, emotional and behavioral adjustment has a higher probability to get good grades in the elementary school. Furthermore,

Cohen stated that social- emotional development of a learner includes his experience, expression, management of feelings and establish a positive and good relationship with others. Hence, a learner who is usually absent or manifests a truant behavior has already missed his ability to identify and understand his own emotions, appropriately comprehend the condition of others' emotions, and manage strong emotions. These may affect his future decisions and lifestyles, and how he will establish and maintain a rewarding relationship with other people in his environment.

In the Philippines, there are legal provisions that warrant the quality and inclusive education for all and school attendance. Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution clearly provides that "the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all." This can also be seen in most orders and memoranda released by the Department of Education. Eventually, DO No. 8, s. 2015 includes the policies on classroom assessment and students' school attendance in pursuant to the K to 12 curriculum. Specifically, it states that a learner who incurs absences of higher than twenty percent of the prescribed number of school days should be given a failing mark and will not earn credits for the subject area. Furthermore, it is still the discretion of the school head to provide exemption to a learner who exceeds 20% threshold for reasons that are deemed to be valid. Hence, giving a failing mark is discretionary and not absolute, even the learner has attained the allowed number of absences in school.

In 2019, Dream Project PH revealed in its study that seven (7) out of ten (10) teenagers do not have ambitions in life. This alarming result of the study can be associated to poverty that these youth encounter in their everyday living. But, it is still imperative to the minds of the educators in the basic education if lack of ambition and poverty are contributory factors to school absenteeism and manifestation of truant behavior among the learners.

In this study, for instance, the dropout rate of the subject locus was tremendously high at 22% and the promotion rate of those who continued was only 79.63% for the First Semester in the SY 2017-2018. In the Second Semester of similar academic year, only eighty nine (89) out of the one hundred thirteen (113) learners were officially enrolled and continued their studies. Eight of the eighty nine learners had consistently incurred two or more absences in a week. In this paper, the researcher explored the lived experiences of Senior High School learners with poor school attendance and manifested truancies at school. From the stories of the learners, the course of action was crafted through the cooperation of selected stakeholders of the learning community.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:
1. What are the antecedents of school absenteeism and truancy among SHS learners?
2. What course of action must be undertaken in order to reduce and eliminate school absenteeism and truancy, in the perspective of:
   2.1. Parents;
   2.2. Teachers; and
   2.3. Guidance counsellor

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

In a broader perspective, the causes of absenteeism and truancy among learners in various levels can be categorized into five (5) predictors, namely: (1). Personal/ individual; (2). Family; (3). Socioeconomic; (4). School climate; and (5). Environment/ community. Each predictor is associated with different contributing factors that may affect to regressing school performance (Balkis, et a.l, 2016), anti-social behavior and separation (Williams, 2010), difficulty to abide appropriate discipline and responsibility (Easman, 2007), anxiety and depression (Indiana Department of Education, 2016), and creation of another problem/ issues in the future.

Accordingly, personal or individual predictor is based on the person's ability to see himself as the main character of reinforcement. It is intrinsic in character and can hardly be modified nor be influenced by anyone from his surroundings. Personal factors may be attributed to: learner's physical and mental health condition; perception of school (Gottfried, 2011); self- inquiry (Genteroy, 2016); lack of interest and motivation in schooling; past experiences; illnesses/ diseases; teenage pregnancy; academic achievement (Komache and Osuu, 2016); alcohol and drug addiction; and sexual promiscuity.

Family- related predictor is an external factor wherein the learner himself is helpless and has no control over the situation. A learner who experiences a family- related predictor may either accept the situation itself or resist from it. Commonly, a family- related predictor with resistance on part of the learner brings a more drastic move that is associated to vengeance and creation of a more complicated problem. Experts believed that family- related predictor includes: composition of household members; household task; placement in protective services; marital problems (Pflug and Schneider, 2015); death of parents and close relatives (Komache and Ossu, 2016).

Socioeconomic predictor is somehow associated to family factors, considering that it is external and cannot be controlled by the learner (the actor) himself. However, he can work hard and do something to pursue his education. Many professionals who previously experienced poverty, managed to finish their studies and later on became successful

in their fields by working and studying hard. Poverty, lack of scholastic requirements, homelessness, school proximity, and starvation are some of the contributory factors that form part of socioeconomic predictor.

School climate pertains to the quality of social interaction between the learners, parents, and school personnel. It is based on the vision-mission, values, overall culture, and practices that exists within the school premise. Although, school climate moderately affect the absenteeism and truancy among the learners (Indiana Department of education, 2016), it is still considered as detrimental to the holistic development of some of learners. Furthermore, the Research Alliance for New York City Schools in 2016 found out that learners perform better when they learn in a positive school climate. Some of the identified factors that affect school climate are: unfavorable student- teacher relationship; cruel punishment imposed by the school; violence and victimization inside the school premise; and undesirable connectedness.

On the other hand, environment plays a vital role in the social educative process in the transformation of the learner's personality as well as his behavior. The environment pertains to the physical environment and the people surrounding it. Tersely, environment is outside of the school premise and refers to the social interaction that a learner witnesses in his community, surrounding, media, and even at home. Experts believed that environmental factors that are closely associated to the learner's absenteeism and truancy are: sexual harassment and abuses; peer influences; peer issues; and cross cultural variables (differences in behavior, perspective, beliefs, and values).

A social interaction is one of the most important factors that need to be given emphasis among the learners because it brings an individual a meaningful learning. Through socialization with various individuals with different personalities, beliefs, cultures and traditions; the learner learns how to adjust and cope up with these differences and diversities. Furthermore, he acquires good practices of other individuals that he can use in his everyday life and in his future by reflecting on the positive aspects of individual diversities. In contrary, the learner's behavior can also be acquired or affected by his external environment. In doing so, he may adapt the negative behavior in response to his negative feelings and thoughts from the people around him.

Julian Rotter's Social Learning Theory provides the salient concepts of observational learning. He believed that experiences of an individual might affect the behavior of another individual. Furthermore, the external stimulus and reinforcer might also affect the behaviors. His theory was focused on the importance of reinforcement, its influence and its sources. He emphasized the focus of control that can be categorized into two: internal focus of control and external focus of control. Rotter discussed that the internal focus of control is an idea wherein an individual would see himself as the main source of reinforcement and the external focus of control is an idea wherein the individual would see other individual as the source of reinforcement.

It consists of four components such as: behavior potential, expectancy, reinforcement, and psychological situation. The behavior potential is the tendency of an individual to engage a certain behavior in a particular occasion. The expectancy is dependent on the past experiences of an individual wherein a given behavior will lead to a certain reinforce or outcome. Reinforcement value states that social outcomes such as approval and belongingness, love or rejection are powerful influences of the behavior. Psychological situation is the subjective interpretation of an individual to his environment which determines his behavior.

The Social Learning Theory of Rotter plays an important role to better explain the causes and draw possible solutions about absenteeism and truancy among the Senior High School students. The main sources of absenteeism and truancy among the students can be personal, family-related, school related or peer-related (community level). The personal reasons are considered as the internal locus of control wherein the learner himself has the full control why he makes absences from his school. On the other hand, the issues which are related to the family, the community and the school are considered as the external focus of control wherein the learner's behavior in making absences and truancy is influenced by his physical environment and the people that surround him.

Eventually, the learners know that there are adverse effects of absenteeism and truancy in their studies. But they may find it as a way to escape their problems at home, at school or with their peers. Rotter explained that "punishments are avoided through repression and goals are strived to attain through rationalization, fantasy, and symbolic meanings." The possible solutions to this school issue can be resolved depending on the level and extent of student's behavior and experiences. Likewise, the student who is exposed to absenteeism and truancy can influence other students to do so.

3. METHODOLOGY:

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN:

This is a phenomenological study is intended to find out the causes of absenteeism and truancy among Senior High School learners, based on their lived experiences. The study is not intended to provide conclusive causes, effects and course of actions on absenteeism and truancy among the learners. Neither, it is not intended that the contexts of this study may be accepted by many other schools at different levels. This study utilized unstructured interviews, which are governed by the constructivist perspective about the social issues that exist in the learning community.

3.2. RESPONDENTS:

The nature of the problem about absenteeism and truancy is associated with the individual issues, family-related issues, school-related issues, and community level issues. In this study, the researcher explored the nature of issues pertaining to individual, family-related, and school-related. Thus, the participants were eight concerned learners, six teachers, a guidance counsellor, and four parents of concerned learners.

The eight learners were purposively chosen as participants of the study. They completed their Junior High School years in the same school and were fully aware about the nature of their school environment, culture and practices. The eight participants consisted of five male students and three female students. Four of the chosen participants used to work after their school hours while the remaining four were full-time students and did not work to support their finances.

Teachers of the concerned learners and the guidance counsellor, excluding the researcher, were interviewed to get their views and thoughts about the prevailing issue at school. They were asked to give possible solutions to resolve the issue on absenteeism and truancy of the concerned learners.

The parents of the eight respondents were also asked to give a time for an interview and discussed with them the issue on absenteeism and truancy that their children manifested. The parents of the concerned learners are working full time in their respective employments. However, only four of them responded and cooperated to the conduct of the interview.

3.3. PROCEDURE:

The researcher utilized unstructured interviews among the participants of the study to gather the necessary information. Unstructured interview, in qualitative research, uses open-ended questions (Given, 2008) to elicit the precepts or individual's social realities (Zhang and Wildermuth, 2009) that are related to the topic of interest to the researcher (Burgess, 1982). The researcher followed the procedures suggested by Fontana and Frey (2005) in conducting an unstructured interview which are enumerated as follows:

- Assessment of the setting such as environment, language, and culture of interview: During the First semester of SY 2017-2018, the researcher made an observation about the characteristics of the students in the school community. It was observed that majority of students do not have the interest to attend their classes. Using the TIMMS Inventory Test, the researcher gathered the demographic profile of the learners to find out their economic status, their study habits, the educational background of their parents, and their social behavior in using the social media, interaction with their classmates, and the school community.
- Planning on how to present the two-way conversation without offending the participants of the study: Considering the ethical perspective in conducting a research, the researcher got a chance to have a casual conversation with one of the respondents of the study on why he was frequently absent in his classes. The respondent answered all the questions being asked without any hesitations nor doubts. Thus, the researcher used unstructured interview to gain the trust and respect of the learners and other participants in the study.
- Find the participants who are willing to participate in the study. The researcher spoke beforehand to the participants of the study and talked about the flow of the conversation. Majority of them agreed and cooperated in the conduct of the interview. Four of the eight parents of the concerned learners did not find time to have a conversation about the topic of interest due to their busy schedule in their respective work.
- Gain trust and rapport with the participants. Pursuant to RA No. 10173, known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, the researcher has the sole accountability in the confidentiality, integrity and availability of their data as well as security incidents and breach of information. As agreed upon, the researcher promised that the identity of the participants and their exact descriptions will not be subject for full disclosure.
- Capture the data by taking short notes during the interview and writing more detailed notes immediately after each interview (Lofland, et. al., 2009). Employing the unstructured interviews to the target respondents, the researcher drafted two questions which were answered by the participants of the study. Their answers were transcribed, coded and consolidated in an interview form as reference in answering the research questions.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS:

The data collected through unstructured interviews from the respondents were immediately recorded to ensure their adherence to the quality of transcription. The responses gathered from the respondents were thoroughly read and scrutinized several times before they were organized and compared for their similarities and differences. The transcripts were analyzed based on meaningfulness, importance, uniqueness and accuracy of the information. The key takeaways in the transcripts were used for proper codification and formulation of themes.

4. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS:

This study discussed the results and findings of the study based on the unstructured interview conducted by the researcher. The discussion and presentation of the results of the study are divided into two main categories, namely: Causes of Absenteeism and Action Plans based on the Perspective of the Teachers, Parents, and Guidance counsellor.

Causes of Students' Absenteeism

Based on the interviews conducted by the researcher, the learners who were habitually absent in their classes were categorized into two groups: (1). Learners who were working after their school hours to support the financial needs; and (2). Learners whose parents are capable to support their needs but the learners were lacking of interest in their studies and merely influenced by their peers.

The group of the learners who were motivated to finish their studies stated that their reasons on their habitual absences at school. Four of them reasoned out that that they need to work to support the needs of their family. They said that the monthly income received by their parents are not sufficient to support the growing needs of their siblings, the monthly house rental and other household expenditures. One of the four learner- participant said:

> *I need to work after my classes because my parents could not afford to support the needs of my family. There are seven household members in our apartment, including my grandmother who was diagnosed with diabetes and she needs medical attention. I work as a longshoreman "kargador" in the midnight market of Divisoria that is why I am always sleepy during day time and I could not focus on my studies.*

Despite of the minor ages of these learners, they are motivated to finish their studies. One of the participants stated that, *"I know the importance of education that is why I enrolled but I need to be absent most of the time because my body and mind could not withstand extreme fatigue and lack of sleep."*

On the other hand, the second group of the learners, who were interviewed, manifested truant behaviors. They skipped classes without parental authority. A female learner-participant admitted that she was living with her boyfriend at an early age of 17. Male learner- participants confessed that they went to computer cafes, played billiards, and hanged out with their friends during school hours and went home on time.

Poverty and financial difficulties, lack of interest, personal reasons, and romantic entanglement were among the causes of absenteeism and truancy among the learner-participants in the study. Working learner- participants, who participated in the interview, were aware that education is important and can be used as their passport for a brighter future. However, due to physical fatigue and financial difficulties they oftentimes missed their classes. Meanwhile, learner- participants who exhibited truant behavior were influenced by their peers and friends.

Ways to Minimize Absenteeism and Truancy

Educational psychologists believed that absenteeism and truancy is not a simple problem that can be solved solely by a teacher, a school administrator, or the parents. It is the problem of the whole learning community that may affect the future of the concerned learner. Hence, parents, teachers and school administrators should work together to stop chronic absences and truancies among the learners (Leong, 2017).

In this study, the researcher consolidated pieces of advice from the teachers, parents, and guidance counsellor to formulate actions that can be used to minimize absenteeism and truancy among the learners. The plan for action is indispensable in order to get the learners back at school and let them continue the fulfillment of their dreams.

Teachers' Perspective

Under the principle of intergenerational equity, every generation holds a responsibility with other generations, particularly present and future generations, to maintain sustainable development in economic, environmental and sociological contexts. It is done by strict adherence to the international and state policies, as well as the norms and morals of the society. In consonance with this principle, educators are called upon to fulfill their responsibility in molding the future of the learners, regardless of creed, religion, gender and other social orientations. Thus, teachers were interviewed to get their views in crafting an action plan to minimize absenteeism and truancy among the learners in Senior High School level.

Before mapping the action plan based on the teachers' perspective, teacher-participants were asked about the role they played in the lives of their learners. Similarly, they were also asked about the issue on absenteeism and truancy among the SHS learners. The teacher-participants in this study concurred that educators have legal responsibility among the learners. The doctrine on loco parentis, a Latin term that implies "in place of a parent," is well-known among the teachers in school. Teacher- participants also recognized their authority and responsibility as provided by Article 218 of the Civil Code which states that "the school, its administration and teachers, or the individual, entity or institution

engaged in child shall have special parental authority and responsibility over the minor child while under their supervision, instruction or custody." Some of the key takeaways pointed out by the teacher- participants are as follows:

Teacher 1 stated that the problems regarding absenteeism of the SHS learners are beyond the control of the teachers. However, she added that as second parents at school, teachers play a significant role in guiding the learners.

Another teacher mentioned that school absenteeism and truancy is rampant but it has to be addressed immediately. Furthermore, she believed that an educator like her can be a key person who can help and save the future of an erring learner.

When the teacher- participants were asked to provide ways on how to minimize the absenteeism and truancy among the SHS learners, they agreed and came up with the following solutions:

- Build a positive relationship between parents and teachers. Accordingly, parents and teachers are both parents to the learners. Being parents of the learners signifies a smooth and constant communication between the teachers and parents. It is important that the teachers relay the academic progress and difficulties of the learners to their parents or even their legal guardians. Teachers must also discuss with the parents about the absenteeism and possible truancies that the learner does at school. Likewise, parents should also communicate to the teachers how their children interact and behave at home.

- Discuss with the learners and their parents their expectations including the academic performance and attendance at school before the class begins and during parents- teachers meeting.

- Determine social issues of the learners at school. Finding the social issues of the learners is really a struggle for the teachers. Sometimes the manifestation of the social issue is not evident. But, no matter how hard it is to determine the social issues of the learners, it is important to bear in mind that teachers have a convincing power to make the learners feel at ease and admit the emotions or things they are not comfortable with.

- Do not be subjective with truant learners. Maintain positive discipline among the learners by talking with them and making them feel that a teacher is interested to listen to their problems. Teachers are also reminded not to give up with the learners' attitude and truant behaviors. Do not discourage the learners to stay away from school by providing them punishment such as suspensions, expulsion or exclusion. In connection with positive discipline, the teacher may also recognize the perfect attendance of learners who did not incur any absence for the whole quarter. This can be done by awarding certificates or posting the names of the learners with perfect attendance in a conspicuous place. In this way, the learners will be motivated to attend classes and participate in class, as provided in Deped Order No. 36, s. 2016.

- Offer the learners an option to catch up with their missed lessons and activities. A positive classroom environment does not embrace the concept of behaviorist perspective, rather it allows the learners to be progressive and learn based on their potentials, skills, and interests. Thus, it is not advisable to give poor grades based on the poor attendance of the learners, especially those who need to work hard for the needs of their families.

Careful scrutiny on the solutions on how to minimize absenteeism and truancy among SHS learners, it can be seen that the teacher-participants do not rely solely on the Cognitive aspect of learning but primarily focused on the Humanistic Perspective of Education. Reviewing the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it can be gleaned that the learner's motivation is affected by his needs- that are hierarchical in nature. It can also be noticed that lower-level needs must be attended and satisfied in order to move to the next level of need. This can be viewed in the case of the learners who were absent due to their work and lack of sleep. Their immediate physiological needs such as food, shelter, and others are more important than their motivation to finish their studies. Thus, they consider education as secondary to their basic needs.

On the other hand, learners who manifested truant behaviors can be best explained by Rotter's Social Learning Theory. The theory emphasizes the role on how external factors such as environment, including peer group and friends influences the truant behavior of the learners. This was observed among the learners who do not need to work and yet they opted to go to other places during school hours, without the conformance of their parents or legal guardians. In contrary, there were also learners who opted not to go to school due to their personal reasons, Rotter explained that personal reasons are internal control factors, primarily based on the wrong decisions and misconceptions of the actor himself (the learner).

Parents' Perspective

As an old saying goes, "little finger's pain is felt by the whole body." The adage implies that parents are deeply affected by the pains and struggles encountered by their children. The disappointment that a learner experienced at school is also felt by his parent. Thus, parents' perspective on school absenteeism and truancy must be given utmost consideration. Based on the interviews conducted by the proponent of the study, the following course of actions were provided by their parents to address the absenteeism and truancy among the learners:

- Get involved in the education and school work of their children. The parents of the learners who manifested truant behaviors admitted that they lacked time to monitor the progress of their children due busy work schedule. Parents, who were then interviewed, realized that it is important to monitor their children's progress at school, even before they sleep at night or during their breakfast hours.

- Communicate to their children about their school attendance and truant behavior. Parents confessed that they are afraid to talk about their children's negative behavior at school. This affirmed the study of Dr. Leonard Sax in 2017 that most American parents are afraid of their own kids. Conversations are usually replaced by earphones or headsets. However, parents must reclaim their authority by relaying the severity of the situation and the possible outcomes that it may bring in their future.

- Observe the feelings of the learner at school and outside the school premise. It is the duty of the parents to personally identify the friends and peers of their children at school and outside the school environment. Parents can also monitor the behavior and feelings of their children from their friends and peers. There are learners who confided their problems to their friends and peers. Rotter believed that the learners feel the sense of belongingness and camaraderie if they share their common issue with their friends and peers.

- Support their children. No matter what happens, children need support and understanding from their parents. It is not enough that parents can provide the financial and material needs of their children. Learners, who did not get parental support and understanding, tend to go and seek the assistance of their friends and peers who usually give them wrong advices and erroneous directions.

Looking back at the suggestions raised by the parents, it can be seen that learners with truant behaviors are those who are permissive and uninvolved. These parenting styles are undesirable because they lack of direction, control and set low expectations among the learners. On the other hand, the parenting style of the parents, whose children are working while studying could neither be classified as authoritative, permissive, uninvolved nor authoritarian. Rather, it is more appropriate to say that their parenting style is the combination of all those four parenting styles.

Perspectives of the Guidance Counsellor

In 2004, Republic Act No. 9258 was enacted. This law is known as Guidance and Counselling Act of 2004 that regulates and professionalizes the counselling system in the Philippines. It also defines the duty of the Guidance Counsellor in the "development of a well- functioning individual primarily by helping him to utilize his potentials to the fullest and plan his present and future in accordance with his abilities and interests."

Invoking the significant role of the guidance counsellor in the holistic development of the learner, thus, the researcher interviewed the person-in- charge in Guidance and Counselling of the school. The person-in-charge is a licensed professional teacher, registered psychologist and registered guidance counsellor. He enumerated ways that can be applied in order to minimize the chronic absenteeism and truancy among the SHS learners, such as:

- A prompt intervention must be done by the school. The moment that the teacher finds out that a learner has issues on school attendance and truancy, he needs to catch the attention of the parents of the learner, other teachers, and guidance counsellor to address the issue, as early as possible.

- Positive reinforcement is necessary to bring the learner's interest back at school. In operant conditioning, positive reinforcement is used to train specific behavior of an organism. In a school environment, wherein the learner is observed to manifest inappropriate behavior such as absenteeism and truancy, the school must not utilize punishment as a mode to correct the undesirable doings of the concerned learner. Instead, the school must devise a plan that will motivate the learner to go back and trust his school. This can be done by giving inspirational stories based on the actual experiences of persons recognized in the community. Likewise, the learner would also feel his sense of belongingness and concern of the learning community in his situation.

- Do not wait, act real time. Problems must be addressed right away. Otherwise, it may result to another problem, which can be more complicated than the current one. The stakeholders of the learning community must act as soon as possible, once they spot the odds in the behavior of the learner.

- Proper counselling is necessary. Not all are trained to give pieces of advices, and conduct counselling to an erring learner. Therefore, it is deemed necessary that the right person must be chosen to facilitate the appropriate counselling. There are still schools who do not have professional guidance counsellor, who are capable of facilitating appropriate treatment and counselling to the erring learner.

Consequently, the recommendations provided by the school guidance counsellors are some of the course of actions enumerated by David Hardy in 2018. In addition to the above recommendations, Hardy suggested that the school must communicate the attendance expectations through the student handbook. He also emphasized that the school must create a positive culture and celebrate the achievement of the learners.

5. CONCLUSION:

In light of the aforementioned results and findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The primary cause of absenteeism among the Senior High School learners at Alonzo High School can be attributed to the socioeconomic condition of their family. Most learners opted to work in order to support their studies and needs of their family. On the other hand, learners who manifested truant behavior were mainly influenced by their peers (environmental factor) and personal choice. Every learner has the potential to be influenced by another learner to embrace undesirable acts.
- In order to minimize absenteeism and truancy among the learners, it is important that teachers, school administrators (guidance counsellors), and parents must maintain constant communication with one another. Stakeholders of the learning community must be vigilant and observant in helping the learners to walk them through on the importance of education and the impact it will bring in their future. Similarly, positive reinforcement is also a key to bring the learners back at school.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the results, findings and conclusion of this study, the researcher highly recommended that future researches with similar objectives must highlight the following points:

- Determine the socioeconomic level of the participants to validate if poverty is the primary factor of absenteeism and truancy among the learners. Behavioral and emotional difficulty level of the participants in handling problems and pressure must be considered, as it may affect emotional and social behavior as well as the habits and lifestyle of the learners in the long run.
- Evaluation of the action plans provided by the stakeholders of the learning community must be measured to find the appropriate action that will help reduce absenteeism and truancy among the learners. Study must be done in a large population to ascertain the results of the study.

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