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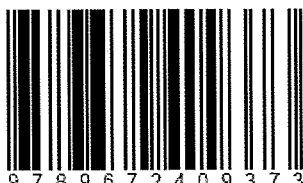
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Factors Contributing to Truancy among Community College Students in Sarawak: The Relationship between Predictors

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ABSTRACT

Truancy is becoming more of a concern. Students who miss classes and never attend college for no apparent cause. This study looked into the factors that contribute to truancy among Sarawak community college students. Random sampling was used to conduct quantitative and descriptive research with 131 students from one of Sarawak's Community Colleges. According to the research findings, factors contributing to truancy among students include a broken family, being forced to further their education in a college community, and misusing electronic media such as a cellphone, computer, and television. The study's findings indicate that institutions must implement more effective intervention measures to ensure that the truancy problem does not spread further. Among the intervention measures proposed are bettering lecturers' teaching quality and implementing more interactive counseling between lecturers and students.

Keywords: Truancy, community college, factor, relationship.

1. INTRODUCTION

The vision set by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia for Community Colleges is to be the leader of an excellent TVET institution in line with Malaysia's growth as a developing country. TVET is full-time technical and vocational education and training, as well as lifelong learning, provided to people of all ages and backgrounds to prepare them for employment and contribute to the country's economic growth. In line with this desire, one of the Community College's missions is to provide widespread access to high-quality, well-recognized TVET programs. To achieve this mission, the challenge is to provide a high-quality TVET program that produces graduates who are well-rounded in terms of intellectual, behavioral, disciplinary, and technical skills.

Discipline problems are always linked to truancy issues, which are common in educational institutions. Students who are frequently absent from class are labeled as problematic. This act of truancy will have a direct impact on the students' behavior and learning in the classroom. This effect will be very noticeable when students are TVET students who are required to perform practical skills face-to-face. Skills cannot be practiced if students do not attend class regularly. This will be a question of the quality of TVET students, who should meet the needs of the industry by contributing to skills, as opposed to university students, who are solely based on knowledge. Clearly showing, the symptoms of truancy that occur in TVET-based Institutions are not a new phenomenon, they have occurred since the establishment of TVET Institutions, and studies have been conducted to identify the causes and factors related to truancy.

1.1 Problem Statement

To produce quality graduates who can meet the demands of the industry based on the field in which they work, the Community College's commitment to this problem is required to avoid

an increase in the number of truancy among students. These symptoms of skipping should be eliminated so that students can attend college full-time and gain the necessary skills in the field of TVET that they have chosen. According to Lukman et al. (2019), absenteeism is becoming a serious disciplinary issue among college students. This problem should be addressed as soon as possible because if truancy is not addressed quickly, it is likely that other students will follow suit. As a result, the research team took the initiative to identify the factors that influence the truancy problem. This study specifically seeks to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the identified factors influencing the problem of truancy among students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Truancy is defined as an event or period of absence from a location. Truancy is increasingly being recognized as an evolving and emergent problem, defined as a student's delinquent act of intentionally missing one or more classes (Qaiser, Isthiaq, & Almas, 2017). Truancy, according to Azizi et al. (2011), is considered deviant behavior when students are absent without a reason and the knowledge of parents or teachers. According to Maya (2019), truancy, absenteeism, or missing more than 20% of lectures per semester is a major problem worldwide. Previous research findings indicate that a variety of factors contribute to student truancy. These factors differ depending on where the research was conducted, but the difference in terms of factors is not significant.

2.1 Learning Environment

The learning environment can be one of the factors that contribute to a student's truancy. The physical environment and the teaching environment are among the identified learning environments. The physical environment includes the classroom layout, wall decoration, wall color, and other amenities such as chairs, tables, a whiteboard, air conditioning, or a fan. The teaching environment refers to the type of environment that the lecturer can provide during his or her classes. This can make students feel like they belong, that they are happy to be there, or it can make them feel bored and neglected by the lectures because there is no interaction between the lectures and the students. According to Ainonmadiah et al. (2016), truancy is associated with a lack of interactions between students and lecturers in class, a lecture room that is not conducive, a large number of students in one class, and a lecturer's delivery method that is not appealing. According to Lukman et al. (2019), several factors cause students to experience school dropout symptoms, including teachers, students, peers, and even parents, all of which have a significant influence on the students who are experiencing school dropout symptoms.

2.2 Family (Parents/Guardian)

Family is one of the factors that contribute to truancy among students. Murat, Gokmen, and Erdinc (2016) stated that student truancy also relates to family factors. A previous study found a link between student truancy with parents' education level and socioeconomic status of the family. According to Lukman et al. (2019), the main cause of the existence of the practice of skipping school is the collapse of a student's family institution. When quarrels between mothers and fathers arise, their children are ignored. All of their children's actions outside of the home and at school are ignored. According to Maya (2019), one of the causes of truancy among students is the family relationship. According to the interview responses, truancy among students was associated with a variety of family circumstances such as taking care of a grandmother who needed to be hospitalized, parents who died and the students felt responsible for everything, students with single parents who had to take care of their younger sister because their mother was sick and fighting for her life in the hospital, and students with single parents who had to take care of their younger sister because their mother was sick and fighting for her

life in the hospital. Lack of parental oversight, poverty, substance and alcohol abuse, lack of family support, household issues, broken families, and household care responsibilities, according to Hopskins, Green, and Burns (2011), are contributing factors that cause students to engage in truant conduct.

2.3 Peers

Truancy symptoms may also be influenced by peers or classmates. Since peers are considered the most understanding and nearest people to the student's self, students who feel reliant on peers due to a lack of attention from parents are more vulnerable to skipping symptoms. Even though it was against college laws, all of the actions and deeds were so much fun. Peers are classified as social support agents, and this assistance is extremely valuable when dealing with life's difficulties. Then, according to Nur Hannan and Zanariah (2020), the strength of social support can be viewed as moral support from others, especially close friends, when students need someone to listen to their problems. This situation reinforces the students' willingness to have more faith in their peers and to not regard the invitation to skip as an offense. Lukman et al. (2019) stated peer control is the source of students' school delinquency.

2.4 Personal Factors

Murat et al. (2016) discovered that student personal factors are among the contributing factors to truancy. Academic self-perception, attitudes toward the teacher, attitudes toward school, motivation/self-regulation, and goal valuation are the five (5) personal variables. Student-related factors contribute to student truancy, according to earlier research by Qaiser et al. (2017). Poor academic performance, exceptional participation in co-curricular activities, poor preparation for regular or weekly exams, incomplete homework, low self-esteem, and inferiority complex are all factors that contribute to truancy among students, according to the findings.

2.5 Electronic Media

According to Lukman et al. (2019), the sophistication of technology in this age of globalization is also a cause for recurrent truancy symptoms in schools, as students would default to the virtual world and ignore valuable time if that time is used as frequently as possible to review students and make it worthwhile. According to the findings of a study conducted by Qaiser et al. (2017), factors linked to electronic media are the most important factors in student truancy. The descriptive research showed that the abuse of electronic devices such as cell phones and computers leads to not only truancy but also harms a student's moral character.

2.6 Lecturer

There are teacher-related factors that contribute to student absenteeism (Qaiser et al., 2017). According to the study's results, lecturer factors such as the lecturer's discriminatory and uncooperative attitude against students, too many assignments assigned by the lecturer, the lecturer's harsh and autocratic attitude, and the lecturer's poor ineffective methodologies, lecturer incompetency, and unpunctuality all contribute to student truancy. Farah (2017) argues that teachers contribute to absenteeism when the proposed teaching techniques and methods are unattractive. This occurs when students are unable to adapt to the activity and teaching styles.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The researchers used a descriptive research design in the analysis. Descriptive, according to Mokhtar Ismail (2011), is a summary of what happens. This is a quantitative study that collects

data from respondents through a questionnaire. The information provided by respondents will only be used once. Quantitative analysis, according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), is described as a study that uses statistics to measure variables for research with a large number of respondents and at least 10 samples. Data is collected cross-sectionally at a given point in time, giving a snapshot of the population at that time. This approach has the benefit of being simple to implement, as the questionnaire is distributed to the respondents and only collected after they have provided their answers.

3.2 Population and Sampling

Mokhtar Ismail (2011) states that population determines the extent and how much data and information needs to be collected and analyzed. The population will determine how much time and energy is needed to solve a problem. For this study, the target sample of the research is Community College students from semesters 2, 3, and 4 who are enrolled in two programs: Certificate in Clothing Fashion and Certificate in Architectural Technology. The population was selected based on the objectives of the study to identify the relationship between factors that influence the problem of truancy in Community Colleges according to the profile of students. The sample size in this study was determined based on simple random sampling. Using a random number table, the sample selection method is from a population from a large list. According to Mokhtar Ismail (2013), simple random sampling means that each subject has the same probability of being selected into the sample and the selection of one subject is not related to the selection of another subject. Researchers have been guided by the sample size determination table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

3.3 Instrument and Pilot Test

Data collected via questionnaire involves Likert Scale 1 to 6 which explain 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat Disagree, 4- Somewhat Agree, 5- Agree, 6-Strongly agree. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. Respondent Demography is covered in Section A, and Factors Affecting Community College Students is included in Section B. Learning Environment, Lecturer, Family (Father, Mother, and Guidance), Peers, Students, and Electronic Media are the six constructs involved. The instrument was adapted from Qaiser (2017).

A pilot study was performed to assess and determine the respondents' comprehension of the questionnaire's objects. According to Johanson and Brooks (2010), a minimum of 30 respondents is needed to assess the validity and reliability of the initial analysis. Following the pilot analysis, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reliability value was introduced, and the questionnaire refinement process was implemented. The researchers compared the Cronbach's Alpha values for each item if the items were eliminated with the Cronbach's Alpha values for the measurements involved in the instrument to decide if the built items were accepted or eliminated. Table 6 shows the Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability values for all dimensions in this analysis.

Pilot test was carried out involving 42 students which was conducted on 14-16 October 2020. For the learning environment dimension (10 items), the identified Cronbach's Alpha value was .930. Next, the lecturer dimension (9 items) and the family dimension (12 items) obtained reliability values as high as .856 and .918, respectively. Accordingly, the peer dimension (4 items) and the student self-dimension (12 items) exhibited Cronbach's Alpha values of .920 and .930, respectively. As for the dimensions of electronic media (4 items), the findings show that the reliability value obtained is as high as .911. Overall, the reliability of the six dimensions in the pilot study was found to be between .930 and .956, which is considered very fine. As a result, all of the items in the questionnaire have an appropriate Cronbach's Alpha rating,

indicating that they are good and effective, with a high degree of quality (Bond & Fox, 2015). This has demonstrated the items' accuracy and reliability, allowing for the collection of additional data for this analysis.

Table 1: Reliability of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients by dimension

Dimension	Number of items	The value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Learning Environment	10	.930
Lecturer	9	.856
Family	12	.918
Peer	4	.920
Student	12	.930
Elektronik Media	4	.911

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pearson correlation analysis was used to measure the strength of the relationship between the six study constructs used. The results showed that all six study constructs had positive and significant correlation coefficient values at the level of $p < .05$. This explains the form of positive and significant correlations between all these constructs.

The highest and positive correlation values could be identified between the constructs of electronic media and students ($r = .854$, $p < .01$) that is, the use of electronic media is strongly related to students' self -perspective. The sophisticated technology in the era of globalization is now the cause of truancy symptoms. Students are not wise to control the use of technology such as mobile phones (Abdullah & Mawaddah, 2013). This causes students to prefer playing games or surfing the internet instead of attending lectures and not being able to manage time well. Next, the lowest and positive correlation value can be detected between the electronic media construct and the lecturer ($r = .470$, $p < .01$) that is the use of electronic media among students with students' views on the lecturer. This means that the use of electronic media has a low influence on lecturers in a positive direction.

Also, the findings found that the lecturer construct had a moderately strong positive relationship with the learning environment construct in community colleges ($r = .722$, $p < .01$). This means that dedicated lecturers will be able to create a conducive learning environment and encourage learning. The family construct was also identified to have a positive and significant correlation with the learning environment construct ($r = .647$, $p < .01$) and the lecturer construct ($r = .528$, $p < .01$). This explains the role of the family also affects the quality of the learning environment and the quality of lecturers. In this study, peer constructs were also found to be positively and significantly correlated with learning environment constructs ($r = .580$, $p < .01$), lecturer constructs ($r = .546$, $p < .01$), and family constructs ($r = .734$, $p < .01$). This shows that the influence of peers on students is closely related to students' perceptions of the learning environment, family, and the lecturers they face. Hendron (2014) also stated that students' attitudes are influenced by teachers. Less interesting teaching will influence students to skip classes because they feel bored. Effective learning comes from a peaceful and serene school environment as it can improve student achievement. The learning environment includes the size of the school, the attitudes of teachers, other students, and administrators who are inflexible in meeting the various cultural styles and ways of student learning. The teacher's teaching that is not interesting will cause students not to be interested in a lesson. The phenomenon of truancy can be attributed to the influence of peers which can lead a person to know the world of good or bad especially in oneself. It is feared that students will be caught in more serious misconduct such as smoking, bullying, stealing, and so on so that sometimes it

can hurt other friends. This is due to the lack of attention from families which encourages students to seek friends as companions throughout their adolescence. However, the presence of their peers can exchange opinions and solve academic problems or schoolwork.

Student constructs in educational institutions were also identified to have a positive and significant relationship on the learning environment ($r=.608, p<.01$), lecturers ($r=.557, p<.01$), family ($r=.788, p<.01$), and peers ($r=.799, p<.01$). This suggests that students' discipline of their own responsibilities in learning is closely related to a combination of factors of the learning environment, lecturers, family, and peers. In this study, electronic media constructs were also found to influence the learning environment ($r=.577, p<.01$), family constructs ($r=.747, p<.01$), and peer constructs ($r=.760, p<.01$). The correlation values for the above study constructs are positive and significant has shown the influence between each of the above constructs in the truancy issues faced. Nichols et al. (2011) stated that family contributes to the factor of truancy school. These include lack of parental guidance or supervision, internal violence, poverty, drug or alcohol abuse in the home, lack of legal awareness, and a lack of education. Parents should play an important role in educating children starting from an early age and always show good behavior in the family.

Table 2: Correlation between study constructs (N=131)

	LNEV	LCTR	FMLY	PEER	STDN
LCTR	.722**				
FMLY	.647**	.528**			
PEER	.580**	.546**	.734**		
STDN	.608**	.557**	.788**	.799**	
ECMD	.577**	.470**	.747**	.760**	.854**

Note:

**Significant correlation at the level of .01 (2-tailed)

LNEV-Learning Environment; LCTR- Lecturer; FMLY-Family; PEER-Peer; STDN-Student; ECMD-Electronic Media

5. CONCLUSION

This study found the highest and most positive correlation value between the construct of electronic media and students, indicating that the use of electronic media is strongly linked to students' perspectives. These results show that the construct of electronic media is a major contributing factor to the cause of truancy problems in Community Colleges. The findings also show that the lecturer construct had a moderately strong positive relationship with the learning environment construct in the Community College. Other variables, such as family, friends, students themselves, and the learning environment, play a role in this issue and should be addressed. Based on the findings of this report, a coaching and mentoring program should be introduced in the future to monitor student attitudes as well as their academic success.

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