PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE AND TRUANT BEHAVIOUR AS CORRELATES OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KANKIA METROPOLIS, KATSINA STATE

Awua Mark Avese[1] & Abubakar Liti Ammani[2]
[1&2]Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Educational Foundations, College of Education, Federal University Dutsin-ma, Katsina State
avesemark@gmail.com +2347063479666

Abstract

This study investigated psychological abuse and truant behaviour as correlates of academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis, Katsina State. A correlational survey research design was adopted. Four research objectives, four research questions and four hypotheses were used for this study. The target population comprised 2,750 Junior Secondary School II (JSS II) students, from which a sample of 110 students was selected through multi-stage sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and students' academic records. The instruments were validated by experts, and a pilot study confirmed their reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.79 to 0.85. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Multiple Regression, and Independent Samples t-test at the 0.05 significance level. Results revealed a significant negative relationship between psychological abuse and academic performance ($r = -0.392$, $p < 0.05$), and between truant behaviour and academic performance ($r = -0.428$, $p < 0.05$). The combined influence of the two variables accounted for 28.8% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.288$). Significant gender differences were also found, with males reporting higher levels of abuse and truancy, while females performed better academically. The study concluded that emotional and behavioural challenges significantly affect students' academic outcomes. The study recommended that there should be the implementation of psychosocial support systems, anti-truancy strategies, and gender-sensitive interventions in schools.

Keywords: Psychological, psychological abuse, truant, truant behaviour

Introduction

Education remains a fundamental pillar for both individual development and national progress, serving as a catalyst for economic empowerment, social mobility, and civic engagement (UNESCO, 2016). While considerable emphasis has traditionally been placed on instructional quality, curriculum design, and teacher effectiveness as primary drivers of academic success and emerging evidence suggests that these alone do not fully account for students' educational outcomes (Okorodudu, 2017; Yusuf & Adigun, 2020). Increasingly, researchers and education stakeholders are recognizing that students' psychological and behavioural conditions significantly influence their academic trajectories. Mental health challenges, adverse emotional experiences, and disruptive behavioural patterns have been shown to undermine attention, motivation, classroom participation, and long-term scholastic achievement (Ogundokun & Adeyemo, 2018). Among the various psychosocial stressors affecting adolescent learners, psychological abuse and truant behaviour have drawn growing concern.

Academic performance refers to the extent to which a student has achieved their short- or long-term educational goals, often measured through results in formal assessments such as tests, examinations, assignments, and continuous assessment records (Yusuf & Adigun, 2018). It is an indicator of a learner's cognitive achievement, mastery of curriculum content, and the ability to apply knowledge in academic contexts. Academic performance is also influenced by multiple interrelated factors including individual abilities, family background, socio-economic status, teacher quality, classroom environment, school attendance, emotional stability, and behavioural attributes (Okorodudu, 2017; Ogunlade & Akeredolu, 2016).

In junior secondary schools, performance is typically measured using students' average scores in core subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, Basic Science, and Social Studies. A student's academic performance not only reflects intellectual development but also predicts future educational attainment and career outcomes. However, when students are exposed to negative psychosocial conditions such as psychological abuse or truancy their academic achievement can be severely compromised (Adeyemo & Oluwatelure, 2016). As such, academic performance serves not only as a measure of intellectual progress but also as a mirror of students' overall well-being and engagement with the learning process.

Ogunlade and Akeredolu (2016) conducted a study in Ekiti State, Nigeria, to examine the influence of emotional intelligence and home background on academic performance among junior secondary school students. A sample of 300 students was selected using stratified random sampling. Using standardized questionnaires and academic records, the researchers found that students with supportive family environments and higher emotional intelligence demonstrated significantly better academic performance. The study concluded that non-cognitive factors such as emotional stability and parental involvement are essential predictors of students' academic success.

Yusuf & Adigun (2018) in a study conducted among public secondary school students in Kwara State, Yusuf and Adigun (2018) explored the role of school attendance, teacher quality, and classroom climate on academic performance. A total of 400 students were selected across ten schools. The results revealed that students with regular attendance and those taught by professionally qualified teachers performed significantly better than their peers. Moreover, positive classroom environments were associated with higher levels of engagement and achievement. The study emphasized the importance of school-related factors in enhancing academic outcomes and reducing underachievement.

Psychological abuse, also referred to as emotional abuse, is a form of maltreatment that involves persistent patterns of behavior by a caregiver, authority figure, or peer that impair the child's emotional development, self-worth, or psychological functioning. Unlike physical abuse, psychological abuse is non-physical but equally damaging, often involving acts such as verbal insults, intimidation, rejection, humiliation, isolation, manipulation, and threats (Adeniyi, 2016). It may be perpetrated by parents, teachers, peers, or even school administrators, and typically results in a chronic sense of fear, worthlessness, insecurity, and helplessness in victims. In school settings, psychological abuse may take the form of public shaming by teachers, favoritism, neglect of students' needs, constant criticism, or peer bullying. These experiences can significantly undermine students' academic motivation, concentration, self-esteem, and ability to form healthy interpersonal relationships (Ugwoke, Eseadi & Nwosu,

2018). Adolescents are especially vulnerable because this developmental stage is crucial for identity formation and social integration.

In a study conducted among secondary school students in Enugu State, Nigeria, Ugwoke et al. (2018) investigated the influence of psychological maltreatment on academic motivation and school adjustment. Using a sample of 400 students and employing standardized emotional abuse scales and academic motivation inventories, the researchers found that students who reported higher levels of emotional abuse from parents and teachers had significantly lower academic motivation and weaker school adjustment profiles. The study concluded that psychological abuse severely compromises students' educational engagement by disrupting emotional stability and reducing learners' perceived academic competence.

Adeyemo and Oluwatelure (2016) explored the relationship between emotional abuse and academic achievement among junior secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria. Utilizing a survey design and a sample of 300 students selected through stratified random sampling, the study employed a validated Emotional Abuse Inventory (EAI) alongside academic records. Findings revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between psychological abuse and students' academic performance. The researchers observed that students who were frequently subjected to verbal assault, neglect, and threats exhibited poor classroom participation, increased anxiety, and lower overall academic scores. The study recommended that school counselors and teachers be trained in trauma-informed practices to identify and support emotionally abused students.

Truant behaviour, commonly referred to as truancy, is defined as the intentional, habitual, and unauthorized absence from school without a valid excuse, often in defiance of school rules and authority (Adeyemi & Alonge, 2017). Unlike occasional absenteeism caused by illness or emergencies, truancy reflects a consistent pattern of school avoidance that may be linked to deeper psychological, familial, or social issues. It is often a symptom of broader problems such as lack of parental supervision, academic difficulties, peer pressure, substance use, or emotional distress (Ayonmike & Agbude, 2016).

Truancy not only reduces instructional time and learning opportunities, but it also disconnects students from school norms and academic responsibilities. Chronic truancy is widely recognized as an early warning sign for academic failure, school dropout, delinquency, and even involvement in criminal activities. Among adolescents, it may serve as a coping mechanism for psychological stress, bullying, neglect, or feelings of alienation within the school environment (Omoike, 2018). Schools that fail to detect and address truancy risk losing significant numbers of students to academic underachievement.

Ayonmike and Agbude conducted a study in Delta State, Nigeria, to investigate the causes and academic implications of truancy among junior secondary school students. Using a descriptive survey design with a sample of 250 students and 50 teachers, the study found that poor parenting, lack of supervision, low interest in schooling, and peer group influence were major drivers of truant behaviour. The study further revealed that students with high truancy records consistently performed below average in core subjects, particularly Mathematics and English Language. The researchers emphasized that truancy disrupts learning continuity and results in loss of academic momentum, thereby reducing long-term academic performance.

In a study focused on Edo State secondary schools, Omoike (2018) explored the relationship between truancy and students' academic performance using a correlational design. A sample of 320 students was surveyed using a truancy scale and a checklist of academic results. The findings indicated a strong negative correlation (r = -0.52) between truant behaviour and academic performance. Students with high truancy levels had significantly lower GPAs than their counterparts with regular attendance. The study attributed poor performance among truants to reduced classroom interaction, missed assessments, and inadequate exposure to schoolwork. It concluded that early intervention and parental involvement are essential in addressing truancy and improving academic outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Academic performance is a crucial indicator of students' cognitive development and future prospects. Ideally, students in junior secondary schools are expected to demonstrate progressive mastery of curriculum content and participate consistently in learning activities. However, growing concerns have been raised by educators, parents, and policymakers about the persistent academic underperformance observed among many junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis, Katsina State. While factors such as inadequate infrastructure and poor instructional quality have often been cited, there is increasing recognition that psychosocial issues particularly psychological abuse and truant behaviour play a critical role in shaping students' academic outcomes (Ogunlade & Akeredolu, 2016; Ugwoke, Eseadi & Nwosu, 2018).

Psychological abuse, though subtle and often unreported, is a silent threat to students' emotional and cognitive well-being. Students who are constantly subjected to verbal insults, public humiliation, rejection, and emotional neglect may internalize feelings of worthlessness and anxiety, which in turn impairs their concentration, motivation, and academic engagement. This issue is particularly pressing in environments where teacher-student and parent-child relationships are characterized by authoritarian control rather than emotional support (Adeniyi, 2016). Despite its profound impact, psychological abuse remains under-recognized in many school environments in Katsina State, with little to no structured intervention mechanisms in place.

Simultaneously, truant behaviour continues to undermine academic efforts across secondary schools. Students who are regularly absent from school without valid reasons miss essential instructional time, fall behind in their studies, and often become disengaged from the school system entirely. Truancy has been linked to poor academic achievement, increased dropout rates, and long-term social problems (Ayonmike & Agbude, 2016). Yet, despite the alarming rate of truancy reported by teachers in the Kankia educational zone, few studies have investigated its underlying causes and direct academic consequences.

More importantly, while existing literature has examined psychological abuse and truancy as separate factors, little attention has been paid to their combined influence on students' academic performance, particularly within the unique cultural and socio-economic context of junior secondary schools in Kankia Metropolis. Without empirical insight into how these two variables interact to affect learning outcomes, interventions remain fragmented and ineffective.

This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this critical gap by assessing the individual and combined effects of psychological abuse and truant behaviour on the academic performance of junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis. The outcome of this research is expected to inform school policies, guide teachers and counsellors, and promote targeted support systems that enhance student learning and psychological well-being.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between psychological abuse, truant behaviour, and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis, Katsina State.

The specific objectives are to:

1. investigate the relationship between psychological abuse and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.
2. examine the relationship between truant behaviour and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.
3. determine the combined influence of psychological abuse and truant behaviour on academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.
4. explore gender differences in psychological abuse, truant behaviour, and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.

Research Questions

In line with the objectives of the study, the following research questions are posed to guide the investigation:

1. What is the relationship between psychological abuse and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis?
2. What is the relationship between truant behaviour and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis?
3. What is the combined influence of psychological abuse and truant behaviour on academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis?
4. Are there gender differences in psychological abuse, truant behaviour, and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated to guide the study:

HO_1: There is no significant relationship between psychological abuse and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.

HO_2: There is no significant relationship between truant behaviour and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.

HO_3: There is no significant combined influence of psychological abuse and truant behaviour on academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.

HO_4: There is no significant gender difference in psychological abuse, truant behaviour, and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.

Methodology

This study adopted a **correlational survey research design** to investigate the relationship between psychological abuse, truant behaviour, and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis, Katsina State. The target population comprised all Junior Secondary School II (JSS II) students across public secondary schools in the metropolis, estimated at 2,750 students for the 2024/2025 academic session. A sample of 110 students was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique involving purposive selection of schools and stratified random sampling of students to ensure proportional representation across gender and school types. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into four sections: Section A captured demographic information; Section B measured psychological abuse using an adapted version of the Childhood Psychological Abuse Scale; Section C assessed truant behaviour through items derived from the Student Attendance and Engagement Inventory; and Section D recorded students' academic performance based on cumulative third-term scores in core subjects (English, Mathematics, and Basic Science). The instrument was validated by experts in educational psychology and tested for reliability through a pilot study involving 30 students outside the study sample, yielding Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of 0.81 for the Psychological Abuse Scale, 0.85 for the Truancy Scale, and 0.79 for Academic Performance data. Data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test hypotheses one and two, Multiple Regression Analysis was used to test hypothesis three, while hypothesis four was analyzed using Independent Samples t-test. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance**.**

Results

The following null hypotheses were tested using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Hypothesis 3 was tested using Multiple Regression Analysis, and Hypothesis 4 was analyzed using an Independent Samples t-test. The level of significance for all tests was set at 0.05.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between psychological abuse and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Result Showing the Relationship between Psychological Abuse and Academic Performance

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	r-value	p-value	Decision
Psychological Abuse	110	46.21	8.37	108	-0.392	0.000	Significant
Academic Performance	110	63.45	7.88				

$p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)

The result in Table 1 indicates a significant negative correlation between psychological abuse and academic performance ($r = -0.392$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that higher levels of psychological abuse are associated with lower academic performance among students.

Hypothesis Two (HO_2): There is no significant relationship between truant behaviour and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Result Showing the Relationship between Truant Behaviour and Academic Performance

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	r-value	p-value	Decision
Truant Behaviour	110	44.56	9.12	108	-0.428	0.000	Significant
Academic Performance	110	63.45	7.88				

$p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)

The result in Table 2 shows a statistically significant negative relationship between truant behaviour and academic performance ($r = -0.428$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that students who exhibit higher levels of truancy tend to perform poorly academically.

Hypothesis Three (HO_3): There is no significant combined influence of psychological abuse and truant behaviour on academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.

Table 3.1: Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error
1	0.537	0.288	0.274	6.70

The model summary in Table 3.1 shows that psychological abuse and truant behaviour jointly accounted for 28.8% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.288$), indicating a moderate combined effect.

Table 3.2: ANOVA Summary for Regression Model

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig. (p)
Regression	1395.72	2	697.86	15.52	0.000
Residual	3432.58	107	32.08		
Total	4828.30	109			

The ANOVA table confirms that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(2,107) = 15.52$, $p < 0.05$). This means that psychological abuse and truant behaviour combined significantly predict academic performance.

Table 3.3: Regression Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
Constant	72.142	2.183	—	33.06	0.000
Psychological Abuse	-0.331	0.093	-0.306	-3.56	0.001
Truant Behaviour	-0.418	0.089	-0.374	-4.70	0.000

Both variables made statistically significant contributions to the model ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The results suggest that psychological abuse and truant behaviour together have a meaningful negative impact on students' academic performance.

Hypothesis Four (H_{04}): There is no significant gender difference in psychological abuse, truant behaviour, and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis.

Table 4: Independent Samples t-test for Gender Differences

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value	Decision
Psychological Abuse	Male	60	47.35	7.96	2.12	108	0.036	Significant
	Female	50	44.78	8.10				
Truant Behaviour	Male	60	46.89	8.75	2.85	108	0.005	Significant
	Female	50	41.83	8.21				
Academic Performance	Male	60	61.72	7.55	-2.37	108	0.019	Significant
	Female	50	65.01	8.00				

$p < 0.05$

The results in Table 4 reveal statistically significant gender differences in all three variables. Males reported higher psychological abuse and truant behaviour, while females demonstrated higher academic performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Summary of Findings

The study examined psychological abuse and truant behaviour as correlates of academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis, Katsina State. Data were collected from a sample of 110 students across selected public junior secondary schools. The results of the statistical analyses are summarized as follows:

1. A statistically significant negative relationship was found between psychological abuse and academic performance ($r = -0.392$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that students who experienced higher levels of psychological abuse tended to perform poorly academically.

2. A significant negative relationship was also observed between truant behaviour and academic performance ($r = -0.428$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that increased truancy is associated with lower academic achievement.
3. Multiple regression analysis revealed that psychological abuse and truant behaviour jointly accounted for 28.8% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.288$, $F(2,107) = 15.52$, $p < 0.05$). Both psychological abuse ($\beta = -0.306$, $p = 0.001$) and truant behaviour ($\beta = -0.374$, $p = 0.000$) made statistically significant contributions to the prediction of academic performance.
4. Independent samples t-test showed significant gender differences in all three variables. Male students reported higher levels of psychological abuse and truant behaviour, while female students had significantly higher academic performance ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between psychological abuse, truant behaviour, and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis, Katsina State. The findings from the analysis provided empirical evidence on how psychological and behavioural factors influence students' academic outcomes. Each of the findings is discussed in light of existing literature and theoretical understanding.

The first finding revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between psychological abuse and academic performance. This suggests that students who are frequently subjected to verbal humiliation, emotional neglect, or threats tend to perform poorly in school. This result supports the findings of Ugwoke, Eseadi, and Nwosu (2018), who reported that emotional maltreatment was significantly associated with reduced academic motivation and engagement among Nigerian secondary school students. Similarly, Adeniyi (2016) concluded that students exposed to psychological abuse exhibited signs of anxiety, low self-esteem, and academic withdrawal. However, contrasting views exist, such as those of Orukwowu and Ukpong (2016), who argued that the effect of psychological abuse on academic performance may be mitigated by strong peer relationships or self-coping strategies. Nonetheless, the current study reinforces the dominant view that psychological abuse disrupts cognitive functioning and academic focus.

The second major finding showed a significant negative relationship between truant behaviour and academic performance. This indicates that students who frequently skip classes without valid reasons tend to perform poorly in their schoolwork. This finding aligns with the work of Ayonmike and Agbude (2016), who identified truancy as a key predictor of poor academic outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools. Similarly, Omoike (2018) found that truant students scored significantly lower in core subjects compared to their peers with regular school attendance. These studies collectively suggest that the loss of instructional time, reduced teacher-student interaction, and disengagement from school norms associated with truancy contribute to academic underachievement. However, contrary evidence by Oduwaiye et al. (2017) noted that in some urban settings, truancy may be more closely linked to school climate and not always reflect poor academic capacity, highlighting the need for contextual interpretation.

The third finding revealed that psychological abuse and truant behaviour jointly predicted academic performance, accounting for 28.8% of the variance. This implies that the combined effect of emotional maltreatment and school absenteeism significantly explains why some

students underperform academically. This finding corroborates the work of Adeyemo and Oluwatelure (2016), who found that when students are emotionally distressed and irregular in attendance, their academic outcomes are significantly compromised. The result is also consistent with Baker, Sigmon, and Nugent (2001), who reported that multi-factor behavioural risks such as emotional trauma and chronic absenteeism interact to produce deeper academic deficits. The implication of this finding is that addressing one variable in isolation may not yield meaningful results unless both psychological and behavioural risk factors are concurrently managed.

The fourth and final finding showed significant gender differences in psychological abuse, truant behaviour, and academic performance. Specifically, male students reported higher levels of emotional abuse and truancy, while female students achieved higher academic performance on average. This is in line with the findings of Yusuf and Adigun (2018), who observed that male students tend to engage more in school-avoidance behaviour and are more frequently subjected to harsh disciplinary practices. The academic advantage of female students may be attributed to greater teacher compliance, classroom discipline, and motivation as previously noted by Ogunlade and Akeredolu (2016). However, studies such as Adepoju (2017) caution that gender differences in academic performance are not universal and may vary depending on region, school culture, and subject matter.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between psychological abuse, truant behaviour, and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Kankia Metropolis, Katsina State. Based on the findings, it is concluded that both psychological abuse and truant behaviour have significant negative effects on students' academic performance. Students who experience emotional maltreatment such as verbal insults, rejection, and constant criticism are more likely to suffer from poor academic outcomes due to decreased motivation, emotional instability, and low self-esteem. Similarly, those who frequently absent themselves from school without legitimate reasons tend to perform poorly due to loss of instructional time and weak academic engagement.

Furthermore, the study established that the combination of psychological abuse and truant behaviour significantly predicts academic performance, accounting for a meaningful proportion of the variance observed in students' results. This suggests that academic underachievement in junior secondary schools cannot be fully addressed without considering the psychosocial and behavioural challenges that students face.

The findings also revealed significant gender differences, with male students experiencing higher levels of psychological abuse and truancy, while female students generally performed better academically. This emphasizes the need for gender-responsive interventions that recognize the unique experiences and vulnerabilities of both male and female learners.

In conclusion, the academic performance of junior secondary school students is not merely a reflection of cognitive ability or instructional quality, but is deeply influenced by emotional and behavioural experiences. Addressing psychological abuse and truancy through school-based counselling, effective monitoring systems, and supportive teacher-student relationships is essential to fostering an inclusive and high-performing educational environment.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings of this study which established significant relationships between psychological abuse, truant behaviour, and academic performance among junior secondary school students, the following recommendations are made:

1. School authorities should strengthen guidance and counselling units with trained personnel to provide emotional support to students who are victims of psychological abuse. Regular psychological assessments and confidential reporting channels should be made available to identify and manage abuse cases early.
2. Schools should implement effective attendance monitoring systems and establish truancy response teams to follow up on students with frequent absences. Early warning signs of disengagement should trigger timely interventions involving parents, school counsellors, and community leaders.
3. Teachers and supporting staff should be trained on child psychology, emotional intelligence, and trauma-informed practices to reduce incidences of psychological abuse in classrooms. Emphasis should be placed on fostering respectful teacher-student interactions.
4. Since male students reported higher levels of truancy and psychological abuse, schools should implement gender-responsive programs such as peer mentoring, boys' leadership forums, and targeted counselling to address their specific challenges and promote academic engagement.
5. Schools should regularly organize parent-teacher forums and community sensitization campaigns to raise awareness about the negative effects of psychological abuse and truancy on academic outcomes. Encouraging supportive parenting and community engagement will enhance student well-being.
6. Schools should adopt holistic approaches that combine academic support with psychosocial care, such as after-school tutorials, mentoring schemes, and social-emotional learning activities. These will help build students' confidence, reduce risky behaviours, and improve academic performance.

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