



Students and Teachers Attitudes Responsible for Poor Academic Performance of Junior High School Students

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of students and teachers attitudes on the academic performance of students in Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, Ghana. A descriptive design was used. The target population for this study consisted of school children and teachers. The study population was made up of students, and teachers of Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools. Simple random sampling was used to select four public Junior High Schools from the circuit. The researcher also used all the teachers in the selected Junior High Schools for the study. The sample size was 205 students. The questionnaire was deemed most appropriate for the study. The questionnaires were designed respectively for school teachers and students. Percentages and frequencies were used to analyze the background information of the participants and the two research questions. The following key findings were made; teacher attitudes that contributed to the low academic achievement of the students in Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools include: teacher's regular absence from school and teacher's lateness to school. However, students' attitudes that are responsible for their poor academic achievement in the Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools are absenteeism, peer group influence, lateness to school and students not enjoying teacher's lessons. Ghana Education Service in Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District should educate students on the adverse effects of absenteeism, truancy and peer group influence on academic performance. The schools should adopt the strategy to reward students who come to school on

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regular basis and those who come to school early. This reinforcement strategy will motivate students who do not like going to school or who do not go to school early to also learn to be going to school on regular basis and also be punctual.

Keywords: Teachers' attitudes; students' attitudes; academic performance; poor academic performance; Junior High School.

1. INTRODUCTION

Students' performance (academic achievement) plays an important role in producing the best quality of students who will become great leaders and manpower for the country. They are thus responsible for the country's economic and social development [1]. Grades awarded to individuals at the end of an academic study are important indicators of ability and productivity when those individuals look for their first jobs. In fact, a person's education is closely linked to his/her life chances, income and wellbeing [2].

A number of teacher-related factors have been identified as having significant influence on student academic performance. Adane [3] found out that teacher factors such as incidence of lateness to school and absenteeism, inability to complete the syllabi and inadequate homework assigned to students contributed to the low academic performance of students from Kemp Methodist Junior High School (JHS) in Aburi, an eastern region of Ghana. The role of the teacher in achieving academic excellence is very important so lateness to school on the part of the teacher affect the students greatly. Teacher's lateness to school affects their output of work in the sense that they are not able to complete their syllabi before students write their final examination. Giving homework to students is a way of ensuring that students continue to learn after school so if teachers fail to give them homework on regular basis it does not encourage the lazy students to learn after school and this affects them academically.

Nyandwi [4] sought to investigate the factors influencing the poor academic performance of secondary schools students in Sumbawanga District, Tanzania. The finding reveals that truancy and incompetence of English language of some students reduce the efficiency in their academic works.

McLean [5] in his study investigated the significant role of pupil attitudes toward learning with regard to the academic achievement of 69 high achieving and 55 low achieving schools in Northwestern Alberta. He found that students' attitudes such as absenteeism, truancy and

indiscipline had a negative effect on their performance. McLean [5] in distinguishing between the attitudes of high and low achievers, he found that five attitudinal factors (motivation for schooling, academic self-concept, referenced-based academic self-concept "perception of others", internal locus of control and instructional mastery) were significantly related to academic performance. Pupil's attitudes may not only directly affect academic achievement but also may indirectly influence the effect of other factors as well. Hassan [6] in his study to assess students attitudes towards school in Mulga, complemented the results of earlier studies, with the former proving that the pupil's initial attitude towards school was significantly related to academic performance, while the latter found that attitudes predicted the pupil's basic approach to learning.

In addition, school attendance has a high correlation with individual academic achievement. The success of a pupil in school is predicated on regular school attendance. According to Allen-Meares, Washington and Welsh [7] poor attendance caused by truancy or unexcused absence from school, cutting classes, tardiness, and leaving school without permission are seen as important in determining pupil's academic. Adane [3] argued that there is a negative relationship between student academic achievement and work during school hours.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

An attitude is a mindset that affects how a person thinks and acts. Attitude can influence a person's performance positively or negatively. For instance, negative attitude towards one's job will result in negative performance. Similarly, attitude could also affect how well a teacher plans and prepares for his/her lessons. The attitude of a teacher, consciously or unconsciously, greatly affects students' academic performance [8]. It has been established that teachers' attitudes highly influence students' interest in learning. Moreover, personality traits of the teachers are more powerful and influential than the course content or instructional strategies used in the classroom. A good classroom strategy requires

full interest and support from teachers and learners [8]. If a teacher appears not interested or careful about a particular subject or student, he/she will be unable to foster a supportive learning environment. In addition to that, teachers with negative attitudes may not be as approachable to students as teachers who are positively motivated. So, students find it difficult asking such a teacher question on the grey areas of the subject he/she teaches. This implies that teachers' attitude towards their students and teaching, in general, is very important for students' success.

In as much as teachers' attitudes greatly influence teaching and learning, students' attitudes towards teaching and learning also have the significant impact on their academic achievement. McLean [5] found that students' attitudes such as absenteeism, truancy and indiscipline had a negative effect on their performance.

The performance of Junior High School students in Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa has been very poor over the years. Mr. Abuguri the District Coordinating Director appealed to district assembly to organize a stakeholders' forum that would offer an opportunity to look into the causes of poor academic performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination in the districts [9]. Since attitudes of teachers and students are very imperative in academic achievement, this study seeks to identify the teacher attitudes that contribute to the poor academic performance of the student's in Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools and also to identify student's attitudes that are responsible for their poor academic achievement.

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to identify the teacher attitudes that contribute to the poor academic performance of the student's in Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools and also to identify students attitudes that are responsible for their poor academic achievement.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the teacher attitudes that contribute to the poor academic performance of the student's in Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools?

2. What are the students' attitudes that are responsible for their poor academic achievement?

1.4 The Significance of the Study

High-quality basic education is of great concern to many Ghanaians these days; and, parents select schools for their children based on performance track records in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). The results of this study would provide the selected JHS, the Government of Ghana, and other stakeholders with relevant information concerning teachers and students attitudes responsible for poor performance and it will help them to improve the performance of these schools. More broadly, the study would help the Ghana Education Service in seeking a solution to the low-performance trend affecting other schools nationwide. The research would also extend knowledge on academic performance in this context. Students would also know the kind of attitude towards learning that when they put up can have negative effect on their performance. Knowledge of this will aid them to also put up behavior that will impact on their academics positively.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This session reviews literature related to the topic. The objective is to explore what major authors and writers have written on the topic.

Etsey, [10] in a study at Shama metro found out that lateness and absenteeism affected completion of syllabi. When the syllabus is not completed, students find it difficult to understand content that is to be taught in the next class which foundation in most cases is based on the previous class. This assertion supports Pryor and Ampiah [11] who in a study to understanding education in an African Village and the impact of information and communication technologies in villages in Ghana, found out that most children do not follow school work because they do not possess the understanding from previous work that is prerequisite for the syllabus of the higher grades of primary school and junior secondary school. The study also found that most children are unable to follow the main 'text' of school lessons, which is constructed by the teacher assisted by one or two higher achieving students and by ritual responses from the rest of the class. The study again found that understanding of students is especially bad when English is used,

as most children cannot speak more than a few basic phrases.

Lockheed and Verspoor [12] asserted that lack of motivation and professional commitment on the part of teachers produced poor attendance and unprofessional attitudes towards students which in turn affect the performance of students academically. Ofoegbu [13] linked poor academic performance of students to poor teacher's performance in terms of accomplishing the teaching task, negative attitudes to work and poor teaching habits which have been attributed to poor motivation. Fobih, Akyeampong and Koomson [14] arrived unannounced in 60 schools in the Central region of Ghana and found that about 85 percent of teachers were late to school. Lateness ranged from five minutes up to one and a half hours. This meant teaching time was lost, teachers taught fewer school subjects (i.e. taught mainly English and Mathematics out of 10 subjects), and the school day for students was shortened.

Both absenteeism and lateness, Bennell and Akyeampong [15] pointed out, are symptomatic of education systems that are unable to manage teachers effectively, have weak teacher management structures, and are unable to provide incentives to motivate teachers to improve their attitudes to work.

3. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, the descriptive design was used. The target population for this study consisted of school children and teachers in Asikuma District Junior High Schools, which is made up 8 circuits. The circuit has 30 (thirty) Junior High schools with students population of 2421 and 185 teachers. All the teachers in the selection Junior High Schools were conveniently sampled. Multi-stage random sampling technique was also used to select 205 students for the study. There are three classes in a Junior High School namely, JHS one, JHS two and JHS three. All the three classes were considered for the study. The questionnaire was deemed most appropriate for the study. The questionnaires were designed respectively for school teachers and students on attitudes which were perceived to be affecting academic performance in the school. The questionnaire for teachers was made up of two sections, A, B and C. Section A sought to elicit demographic data of the teachers and section B was made up of 8 items and it elicited information on the perceived teacher attitudes contributing to poor academic performance of

students. Section C was made up of 8 items and it elicited information on the perceived students' attitudes contributing to poor academic performance of students. The students' questionnaire was made up of 2 sections, A and B. Section A sought to elicit demographic data of the students and section B was made up of 8 items which sought information on perceived school-related factors contributing to students' poor academic performance. The instruments used were pre-tested. The reliability statistic for the students' and teachers questionnaire had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80 and 0.83 respectively.

Responses to the various items in the questionnaires were also added, tabulated and statistically analysed. All items of the questionnaires were coded. Items in the form of four point Likert scale were rated between 4-1, with 4 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. Percentages and frequencies were used to analyze the background information of the participants. I used percentages and frequencies to answer research question one and research question two. Percentages and frequencies were used to ensure clear understanding and interpretation of the data analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of the background data of the respondents.

Table 1. Gender distribution of teachers

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	15	60.0
Female	10	40.0
Total	25	100

From Table 1, it can be observed that, out of the 25 teachers used for the study, 15 (60.0%) were males while 10 (40.0%) were females. This means that the males exceeded the female.

Table 2. Gender distribution of the students

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	103	50.2
Female	102	49.8
Total	205	100.0

Table 2 shows that, out of the 205 respondents, 103 representing 50.2% were males and 102 respondents representing 49.8% are females. This shows gender balance among respondents.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of teachers attitudes causing poor academic performance of students

SN	Statement	N	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)
1	My good interpersonal relationship with students tends to affects their performance positively	25	19(76)	6(24)
2	My interest in students school work affects their performance positively	25	19(76)	6(24)
3	My lateness to school tends to affect students learning Negatively	25	19(76)	6(24)
4	My absence from school on regular basis affects students performance negatively	25	22(88)	3(12)
5	Students performance is affected negatively if am unable to complete their scheme of work (syllabus)	25	16(64)	9(36)
6	My poor attitude towards tends to affect students performance negatively	25	21(84)	4(16)
7	My failure to use English language in teaching it affects pupil's ability to express themselves	25	17(68)	8(22)

4.1 Research Question 1

Table 3 presents the findings from the study. To elicit from the teachers whether teachers good interpersonal relationship with students tends to affect their performance positively, majority 19(76%) indicated that students academic performance largely depends on the teachers good interpersonal relationship with their students. With respect to absenteeism of teachers, majority 22(88%) of the teachers indicated their regular absence from school has resulted in their students' poor performance.

Concerning teachers lateness to school, majority 19(76%) of the respondents indicated that their lateness to school has had an adverse effect on students performance.

This findings confirm the study of Etsey [10] who attributed the cause of poor academic performance in the Shama Sub-Metro of Shama Ahanta East Metropolitan Assembly (SAEMA) in Ghana to a combination of factors relating to teacher factors such as lateness to school, incidence of absenteeism, use of the local language in teaching, inability to complete the syllabi, less interest in children's understanding of lesson and not hardworking.

The findings also support the work of Adane [3] who found out that teacher factors such as incidence of lateness to school and absenteeism,

inability to complete the syllabi and inadequate homework assigned to students contributed to the low academic performance of students from Kemp Methodist JHS. The role of the teacher in achieving academic excellence is very important so these factors on the part of the teacher affect the students greatly.

In another study, Fobih, Akyeampong and Koomson [14] arrived unannounced in some 60 schools and found that about 85 percent of teachers went to school late. Lateness ranged from five minutes up to one and a half hours. This meant teaching time was lost, teachers taught fewer school subjects (i.e. taught mainly English and Mathematics out of 10 subjects), and the shortening of the school day for students.

4.2 Research Question 2

I sought knowledge from the teachers about students' attitudes that contributed to cause poor academic performance of students in Asikuma circuit. Responses were put on a four point likert scale, VO- Very Often, O- Often, S- Sometimes, and R- Rarely. Very Often means it happens all the time, Often means it happens most of the times, Sometimes means it happens occasionally and Rarely means it mostly does not happen. For better and clearer understanding, very often and often were put Together as often. Whiles Sometimes and Rarely were maintained.

Table 4. Descriptive analysis of students attitudes causing poor academic performance of students (teachers)

SN	N	Often		Sometimes		Rarely	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. How often do your students come to school before morning assemblies?	25	19	76	1	4	5	20
2. How often do your students absent themselves from school?	25	13	52	10	40	2	8
3. How often do your students do their class exercises?	25	24	96	1	4	0	0
4. How often do your students come to school late?	25	23	92	2	8	0	0
5. How often do your students participate in class lessons?	25	25	100	0	0	0	0
6. How often do your students participate in extra classes in the school?	25	17	68	7	28	1	4
7. How often do your student useLocal language to communicate among themselves during class lessons?	25	17	68	5	20	3	12
8. How often do your students get-motivated in studying?	25	12	48	13	52	0	0

From Table 4, concerning students absenting themselves, majority 13(52%) of the teachers indicated that their students often absent themselves from school. On lateness to class, 23 (92%) indicated that their students often come to school late. Twelve (48%) of the respondent indicated that their students often get motivated in studying, 13(52%) indicated that their students sometimes get motivated in studying.

This findings support the work of Allen-Meares, Washington and Welsh [7] who found that poor attendance caused by truancy or unexcused absence from school, cutting classes, tardiness, and leaving school without permission is seen as important in determining pupil's academic performance.

Also, McLean [5] investigated the significant role of pupil attitudes toward learning with regard to their academic achievement. Students' attitudes such as absenteeism, truancy, indiscipline, had a negative effect on their performance.

Diaz [16] found that when a student is strongly motivated, all his effort and attention are directed toward the achievement of a specific goal, thus bringing to bear all his or her resources.

From Table 5, concerning peer group influence, the majority 121(59.6%) of the students stated that peer group influence affects their learning

negatively. Again, on issues relating to students lateness to school, majority 116(56.9%) of the students indicated that their lateness to school affects their learning in a negative way. Furthermore, concerning students absenting themselves, out of the 205 students who were involved in the study, majority 192(65.0%) indicated they strongly agree that absenting themselves from school on a regular basis affect their learning negatively, 113(55.2%) of the students agreed that they are not happy in school and this affects their learning negatively. Moreover, the students were asked if they enjoy their teacher's lesson and out of the total 204 respondents, 131(64.3%) agreed that they mostly do not enjoy their teacher's lessons and it tends to affect their learning negatively.

These findings confirm the work of Allen-Meares, Washington and Welsh [7] who found out that poor attendance caused by truancy or unexcused absence from school, cutting classes, tardiness, and leaving school without permission is seen as important in determining pupil's academic performance. The finding further confirms the work of McLean [7] who investigated the significant role of pupil attitudes toward learning with regard to their academic achievement. McLean found out that students' attitudes such as absenteeism, truancy and indiscipline, had negative effect on their performance.

Table 5. Students' attitudes that contribute to the poor academic performance (students)

SN	Statement	Strongly agree F (%)	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Strongly disagree F (%)	Total F (%)
1	Peer group influence affects my learning negatively.	121(59.6)	45(22.2)	19(9.4)	18(8.9)	203(100)
2	Truancy affects my learning negatively.	114(56.4)	45(22.3)	16(7.9)	27(13.4)	202(100)
3	My lateness to school affects my learning in a negative way.	116(56.9)	52(25.4)	19(9.3)	17(8.3)	204(100)
4	Absenting myself from school on a regular basis affect my learning negatively.	132(65.0)	40(19.7)	12(5.9)	19(9.3)	203(100)
5	My failure in doing my homework affects my learning negatively.	122(59.5)	46(22.4)	18(8.8)	19(9.3)	205(100)
6	My use of local language more than the official language (English) affects my learning positively.	56(27.3)	50(24.4)	58(28.3)	41(20.0)	205(100)
7	I am not happy in school and this affects my learning negatively.	60(29.3)	53(25.9)	35(17.1)	57(27.8)	205(100)
8	I mostly do not enjoy my teacher's lessons and it tends to affect my learning negatively.	66(32.4)	65(31.9)	31(15.2)	42(20.6)	204(100)

5. CONCLUSION

The following key findings were made; teacher attitudes that contributed to the low academic achievement of the students in Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools include: teacher's regular absence from school and teacher's lateness to school.

However, students' attitudes that are responsible for their poor academic achievement in the Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools are absenteeism, peer group influence, lateness to school and students not enjoying teacher's lessons.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the research; it is recommended that Ghana Education Service in Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District should educate students on the adverse effects of absenteeism, truancy and peer group influence on academic performance. The schools should adopt a strategy to reward students who come to school on regular basis and those who come to school early. This reinforcement strategy will motivate students who do not like going to school or who do not go to school early to also learn to be going to school on regular basis and also be punctual.

Asikuma circuit teachers should also motivate their students and make the classroom environment lively. Ghana Education Service should organize workshops for Asikuma circuit teachers to educate them on how to make their class interesting so that their students will enjoy their lesson.

Asikuma circuit teachers should be encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards their students so that the students can readily approach and relate to them. This will help the students to easily communicate to them whatever issues bothering them.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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