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An Investigation of Academic Performance for Junior High School Students in Ho West District, Ghana

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Abstract:

This study investigated the poor academic performance of public JHS students in the Ho West District. This study was a sequential explanatory mixed approach underpinned by pragmatic philosophical thought. It employed a descriptive survey and case study designs, where data were collected in two phases using three-point Likert-type scale questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. At the quantitative phase, a questionnaire was administered to students and teachers while the qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews for head teachers and circuit supervisor. The quantitative data were analysed and the results were presented using frequency and percentage. The qualitative data were thematically analysed to explain issues as they emerged from the quantitative data. The findings of the study revealed that home factors such as poor socio-economic status of parents, unsatisfactory supervision and monitoring of pupils at home, and excessively engaging pupils in household and child labour activities significantly affected the academic performance of pupils. Learner factors such as the poor attitude of pupils to school and learning fairly contributed to the poor academic performance of the pupils. School factors such as large class size, low motivation for teachers and job dissatisfaction, and poor supervision of teachers were linked to the poor academic performance of pupils. In light of these findings, the study recommended among other things that parents should adequately provide for the basic and school needs of their wards. Again, it was also recommended that pupils should be encouraged to attend school always.

Keywords: Academic performance, junior high school students, home, school, learner factors, head teachers and circuit supervisor

1. Introduction

Academic performance has always been one of the main goals of education. The UN Convention on the Rights of the child states that 'no person shall deprive a child of access to education; immunization, adequate diet, clothing, shelter, medical attention or any other thing required for his or her development'. In Ghana, the value of education is given more weight through the introduction and implementation of Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). This policy has been given a further boost with the introduction of a capitation grant and the attendant school feeding programme (SFP). The Government of the Republic of Ghana in West Africa like UNESCO (2006) and other scholars (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007), recognize that high-quality basic education is the essential goal of formal education as it enhances the development and well-being of the individual and society. Ankomah et al. (2005) assert that the quality education of a country can be identified by the examination results of its students. According to Etsey, Amedahe and Edjah (2005), educators are interested in the progress of the child especially as it relates to learning. Academic performance is 'what a student is capable of achieving when tested or examined on what he/she has been taught (Otu-Danquah, 2002).

A personal random observation on the continuous assessment records of some of the JHS students revealed that the test and examination scores of most of the students were relatively low. Besides, the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) of the district is worrying. The BECE results of the district from 2015 to 2017 are presented in Figure 1.1. The results in Figure 1 revealed that in 2015, 39% of the students who wrote the BECE passed while the remaining 61% failed. The district recorded an improvement over the 2015 results where the percentage pass increased from 39% to 45% and the failure rate reduced from 61% to 55% in 2016. Recently, in 2017, the pass rate reduced from 45% to 36% while the failure rate increased from 55% to 64%. With these results, the average BECE performance of students in the district over the period under review is 40% pass rate and 60% failure rate.

Figure 1: Trend in BECE Performance in the Ho West District
Source: Examination Unit of the Ho West District

A discussion with some parents, teachers and school authorities during school performance appraisal meetings (SPAM) revealed that parents blamed teachers for the poor academic performance of students because of poor teaching. Teachers also alleged that some parents often engaged their wards in selling activities during school hours. According to them, this situation has led to the poor academic performance of their wards. School authorities and teachers further accused some parents for not taking full responsibility for their wards' needs. They attributed students' poor academic performance to parental neglect which is partly due to broken homes or financial constraints (personal communication, 2016). In the light of the above, it is not clear what factors really account for the poor academic performance of public JHS students in the Ho-West District. It is on the basis of this dilemma that this study investigates the academic performance of the students. This paper therefore, attempts to investigate the poor academic performance of public JHS students in the Ho West District. The study sought to answer this research question.

To what extent do home, school and learner factors contribute to academic performance of JHS students in Ho West District. This study would be of benefit to all stakeholders of education in the Ho-West District. It would help educational administrators and the Ho-West District Assembly in the ways to improve educational infrastructure and other teaching/learning facilities of basic schools in the municipality. Knowledge of the factors that influence students' academic performance would assist the government, administrators of schools, and all stakeholders to adopt practices which best contribute to quality teaching and learning as well as students' academic performance. This study should provide valuable findings that other researchers could use as a guide to generate additional data on the topic in similar educational contexts.

2. Theoretical Review

There is a growing concern nowadays about the type of students' schools produce. The industry is now questioning the integrity of the present-day teachers. The policymakers, educators and the parents have also joined the chorus. In this article, critical theory was used to understand the nature of problems attributed to the students' low performance. Critical theory is based on the fact that the respondents are human beings who need to be given freedom from the circumstances which seem to enslave them; and prescribe the type of behaviour a democratic society is expected to entail (Basit, 2010). The approach is in agreement with the idea that; critical theory "provides the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms" (Stanford Encyclopaedia, 2005, p.1). This seems to suggest that with the critical theory the disempowered individuals are empowered. In this sense, teachers have been criticised for the poor students' academic performance because they are duty bound to make students go through all forms of testing. They have been isolated from other education stakeholders and students' achievement is used to determine the teachers' effectiveness. Teachers have been threatened with job losses every time when the results are not pleasing the parents and the public. They are facing 'inequality' and 'discrimination' in spite of the fact that students' performance is determined by a number of factors which some teachers have no control over them. So, critical theory seeks to advance freedom and democracy for the betterment of individuals and society (Basit, 2010).

With these views, we employed a critical lens to interrogate the teachers' and students views about the declining performance. With critical theory, "the researcher's aim is to explore perspective and shared meanings and to develop insights into situations e.g. schools, classrooms" (Wellington, 2000, p.16). Critical educators seek to learn what is meaningful or relevant to people by getting to know the social world and seeing it from the point of view of the people being studied (Neuman, 1997). Critical theory "identifies the 'false' or fragmented consciousness that brought an individual or social group to relative powerlessness or, indeed, power, and it questions the legality of this" (Cohen, Manion, & Morris, 2007, p.28). Critical theory was used in view of the fact that those who have an impact on students' achievement face challenges pertaining to the expectations of the Ho West District and the purpose of schools.

3. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a hypothetical model used to identify variables in a study. It mainly shows the relationship between independent variables and dependable variables. The purpose of this conceptual framework is to help establish the relationship between Home, School, and Learner Factors on academic performance. The study conceptualised that all public JHS in Ho West District has well-trained teachers, good classroom environment, well teacher motivation, good teacher-student relation are moderating variables. For students to harmonise their abilities, interests and values and thereby develop their full potential or academic performance. The influence of inter-relatedness of home, school and learner factors count a lot.

The home factors which either promote or hinder academic achievement of students include parent's socio-economic status (SES), child rearing/parenting style, home environment and resources, parent's attitude to formal education, and broken home/single parenthood. School factors such as school environmental factors, school climate and management style, teacher factors, and proper use or loss of instructional time influence academic performance. Again, learner factors such as attitude to school/learning, peer influence, and excessive use of media such as television, mobile phone and internet influence academic performance. The researcher perceived that if home, school and learner factors are well attended to students may able to reach the academic potential which will result in academic performance

4. Research Methods

The methodological choice of this study was underpinned by pragmatic paradigm but the design for the study was sequential explanatory mixed method design (Creswell, 2014). The aim of the sequential explanatory helps to explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by making use of quantitative data and supporting it with qualitative data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Also, the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone (Creswell, 2014). This approach requires the researcher to collect both quantitative and supporting it with qualitative data. Since the study is sequential explanatory mixed method approach, the researcher intends to use descriptive survey design for the quantitative phase and case study design for the qualitative phase.

The population for the study were all Student Junior High School in Ho West District. However, the accessible population for the study comprised of three (3) Junior High School. The sample consists of 111 people. At the quantitative phase, simple random sampling was used to select 35 students from the three selected school while purposive sampling procedure was used to select three (3) head teachers and (3) circuit supervisors for the qualitative phase. A small sample was selected for the qualitative phase because Creswell, (2005) argues that selecting a large number of interviewees will 'result in superficial perspectives ... the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site' (p.207).

A structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were the instruments used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire was used to collect data for the quantitative stage, while the semi-structured interview guide was employed to gather data in the qualitative stage. By the way to establish the validity of the instruments, colleagues from the department of education were given the instruments check for flaws and problems in the study. Remarks from them were favourable and no changes were made in the instruments. The researchers checked reliability by asking the students to either confirm or disconfirm their statements after each interview have been transcribed. The data were analysed using frequency, percentages, correlation analysis and regression (quantitative Phase) and thematic analysis were used for the qualitative phase. For example, Interviewee Head teacher was assigned (IHT-1); Interviewee Head teacher (IHT-2), Interviewee Head teacher (IHT-3), Interviewee Circuit Supervisor (ICS-1), Interviewee Circuit Supervisor (ICS-2) and Interviewee Circuit Supervisor (ICS-3).

5. Findings

This section presents the findings from the quantitative and qualitative phase.

5.1. Home Factors on the Academic Performance

Statement		Students (n=105)			Teachers (n = 15)		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Parent's socio-economic status affects academic Performance	Freq	55	3	47	11	0	4
	%	52	3	45	73	0	27
Parents provide basic needs for wards	Freq	60	0	45	10	0	5
	%	57	0	43	67	0	33
Parents provide school needs for their wards	Freq	55	3	47	9	0	6
	%	52	3	45	60	0	40
Parents pay school levies for their wards	Freq	48	2	55	7	0	8
	%	46	2	52	47	0	53
Parents provide opportunity for extra tuition at home or school for their wards	Freq	32	7	66	6	0	9
	%	30	7	63	40	0	60
Parents offer counselling services for wards at home	Freq	24	11	70	4	2	9
	%	23	10	67	27	13	60

Statement		Students (n = 105)			Teachers (n = 15)		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Parents help wards with and/or supervises Homework	Freq	32	7	66	3	1	11
	%	30	7	63	20	7	73
Parents engage wards in excessive household work/labour	Freq	72	0	33	9	0	6
	%	69	0	31	60	0	40
Parents encourage wards to learn at home	Freq	40	4	61	3	2	10
	%	38	4	58	20	13	67
Broken home/single parenthood affects wards academic performance	Freq	63	5	37	11	0	4
	%	60	5	35	73	0	27

Table 1: Home Factors on the Academic Performance

Key: 1 = Agree; 2 = Neutral; 3 = Disagree

Source: Fielddata (2017)

A majority (55) which represents 52% of the students and 11 (73%) teachers agreed that poor socio-economic status of parents affected their academic performance. Forty-seven (45%) of the students and 4 (27%) teachers held divergent views, whereas 3 (3%) students were uncertain. Sixty (55%) students and 10 (67%) teachers affirmed that parents satisfactorily provided the basic needs of students. In contrast, 45 (43%) students and 5 (33%) refuted this claim. Similarly, 55 (52%) students and 9 (60%) teachers asserted while 9 (60%) students and 6 (40%) teachers disagreed that parents satisfactorily provided for the school needs of students. Only 3 (3%) of the students were indecisive.

Twenty-four (23%) students and 4 (27%) teachers admitted that parents provided counselling for students. In contrast, 70 (67%) students and 9 (60%) teachers disagreed with the statement. Eleven (10%) students and 2 (13%) teachers were irresolute. Thirty-two (30%) students and 3 (20%) teachers indicated that their parents often helped and supervised their homework. Conversely, 66 (63%) students and 11 (73%) teachers held incongruent views. Seven (7%) students and 1 (7%) teacher were uncertain. More so, 72 (69%) students and 9 (60%) teachers consented that parents always engaged students in excessive household work and child labour activities. However, 33 (31%) students and 6 (40%) teachers disagreed with this statement. Forty (38%) students and 3 (20%) teachers admitted that parents often encouraged students to learn. Nonetheless, 61 (58%) students and 10 (67%) teachers held opposing views. Only 4 (4%) students and 2 (13%) teachers were indecisive. Again, 63 (60%) students and 11 (73%) teachers consented while 37 (35%) students and 4 (27%) teachers disagreed with the statement that broken homes or single parenthood affect the academic performance of students. Only 5 (5%) of students were indecisive. From the qualitative phase, interviewees asserted that:

I believe a stable home and education are vital for children's growth and development. Most of the children in this school come from unstable homes (for example, single-parent families).

These vulnerable children face horrendous problems at home. They misconduct themselves and, they disrespect school rules and regulations. It's really a concern because it hinders teaching and learning, especially the academic performance of students (IHT-1). Finance is a major challenge to most of the parents. Parents' inability to financially support their wards really affects their academic achievement. Besides, the lack of supervision at home and bad peer influence greatly affect students' academic progress (IHT-2).

There is no support (lack of support) from the community. Members of the community believe that the welfare of the school is the sole responsibility of the government. The community members also believe that it is a responsibility of the government to finance the school and supply all the materials which they need. So, they do not support teaching and learning activities (ICS1). Members of the community sometimes attack school authorities on suspicion that school girls are being chased by the male teachers of the school. This affects teaching and learning, and the academic performance of students (ICS-3).

5.2. School Factors on the Academic Performance

Statement		Students			Teachers		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Poor and inadequate school infrastructure affects academic performance of students	Freq	58	5	42	7	3	5
	%	55	5	40	47	20	33
Poor learning environment affects academic performance of students	Freq	60	9	36	8	1	6
	%	57	9	34	53	7	40
Large class size affects academic performance of students	Freq	81	4	20	9	2	4
	%	77	4	19	60	13	27
Limited teaching & learning materials affect academic performance of students	Freq	54	7	44	7	3	5
	%	51	7	42	47	20	33
The headmaster of the school does not motivate teachers to teach	Freq	60	0	45	6	1	8
	%	57	0	43	40	7	53
The headmaster promotes discipline in the School	Freq	63	4	38	7	2	6
	%	60	4	36	47	13	40

		Students			Teachers		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
The headmaster encourages students to learn	Freq	64	0	41	7	0	8
	%	61	0	39	47	0	53
Low motivation for teachers & job dissatisfaction affect academic performance of students	Freq	83	0	22	10	2	3
	%	79	0	21	67	13	20
Poor supervision of teachers affects academic performance of students	Freq	78	0	27	9	2	4
	%	74	0	26	60	13	27
Poor teaching affects academic performance of students	Freq	77	0	28	8	1	6
	%	73	0	27	53	7	40
Poor attendance of teachers & students to school affect academic performance	Freq	64	0	41	9	3	3
	%	61	0	39	8	2	5
Inability of teachers to give, supervise & mark adequate assignments of students affect performance	Freq	82	4	19	10	2	3
	%	78	4	18	67	13	20

Table 2: School Factors on the Academic Performance

Source: Fieldwork Data (2017)

Key: 1 = Agree; 2 = Neutral; 3 = Disagree

Fifty-eight (55%) students and 9 (47%) teachers opined that poor and inadequate school infrastructure affected the academic performance of students. Forty-two (40%) students and 5 (33%) teachers held dissimilar opinions, whereas 5 (5%) students and 3 (20%) teachers were irresolute. Also, 60 (57%) students and 8 (53%) teachers agreed while 36 (34%) students and 6 (40%) teachers disagreed that poor learning environment affects the academic performance of students. Nine (9%) students and 1 (7%) teacher were indecisive. Eighty-one (77%) students and 9 (60%) teachers affirmed while 20 (19%) students and 4 (27%) disagreed that large class sizes affected their academic performance. Four (4%) students and 2 (13%) teachers were undecided. Fifty-four (49%) students and 7 (47%) teachers concurred while 44 (42%) students and 5 (33%) teachers disagreed that limited teaching/learning materials affected the academic performance of students. Seven (7%) students and 3 (20%) teachers were indecisive.

Sixty (57%) students and 6 (40%) teachers stated that inadequate textbooks affected the academic performance of students. Forty-five (43%) students and 8 (53%) teachers held divergent views. Only 1 (7%) teacher was irresolute. More so, 63 (60%) students and 7 (47%) teachers asserted while 38 (36%) students and 6 (40%) teachers disagreed that headmasters of the schools do not motivate teachers to teach. Four (4%) students and 2 (13%) teachers were irresolute. In addition, 64 (61%) students and 7 (47%) teachers consented while 41 (39%) students and 8 (53%) teachers disagreed that headmasters promote discipline in the schools. Further to that, 83 (79%) students and 10 (67%) teachers asserted that headmasters encouraged students to learn. Twenty-two (21%) students and 3 (20%) teachers held opposing views. Two (13%) students were indecisive. Seventy-eight (74%) students and 9 (60%) teachers confirmed that low motivation for teachers and job dissatisfaction affected the academic performance of students. Nevertheless, 27 (51%) students and 4 (27%) teachers held opposing views. Two (13%) students were indecisive. Moreover, 77 (73%) students and 8 (53%) teachers admitted while 28 (27%) students and 6 (40%) teachers disagreed to the statement that poor supervision of teachers affected the academic performance of students. Only 1 (7%) teacher was irresolute. With regard to this research question interviewees believe that:

This school has inadequate school infrastructure. For instance, we lack science and ICT laboratories. This retards academic work. Again, late release of capitation grant hinders the smooth running of the school. I must also admit that there is a lack of commitment on the part of some of the teachers (IHT-2).

Poor school attendance by the teachers particularly teacher absenteeism is a problem which hampers teaching and learning in this school. Also, the involvement of students in so many co-curricular activities retards students' academic achievement. We receive a threat from parents of students whenever we punish their wards for wrongdoing. This puts fear in us. As a result, we are not able to effectively discipline the students as required (IHT-3).

Some of the teachers are temperamental. They are not patient. So, most of the students are afraid to even ask for explanations in class. I think this does not promote effective teaching and learning. Some of the teachers use inappropriate strategies and approaches during teaching and learning. This does not help students' academic progress. I must also confess that some of the school rules are rigid. I believe students and teachers do not have the freedom to effectively function (ICS-2).

I and the teachers (we) sometimes face threat from parents and some old students. They claim the school belongs to them and that the teachers do not have the right to punish wards whenever they go wrong. The school-community also feels that the school must permit them to use the school compound for sporting activities, conventions, funerals even when classes are in session. This is a bother. It does not foster positive cooperation when it comes to teaching and learning (ICS-3).

5.3. Learner Factors on the Academic Performance

Statement		Students			Teachers		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Poor attendance (irregularity & lateness) to school affect academic performance of students.	Freq	69	0	36	11	0	4
	%	66	0	34	73	0	27
Poor attitude to school & learning affects academic performance of students.	Freq	66	0	39	11	0	4
	%	63	0	37	73	0	27
Playing truancy at home/school affects academic performance of students.	Freq	79	0	26	9	0	6
	%	75	0	25	60	0	40
Laziness in learning affects academic performance of students	Freq	70	0	35	8	2	5
	%	67	0	33	53	13	33
Poor time management affects academic performance of students.	Freq	73	0	32	10	1	4
	%	70	0	30	67	7	27
Refusal to do assignments & late submission of work affect academic performance of students.	Freq	64	0	41	9	3	3
	%	61	0	39	60	20	20
Bad peer influence affects academic performance of students.	Freq	79	0	26	12	0	3
	%	75	0	25	80	0	20
Indiscipline at home and school affects academic performance of students.	Freq	79	0	26	10	1	4
	%	75	0	25	67	7	27

Table 3: Learner Factors on the Academic Performance

Key: 1 = Agree; 2 = Neutral; 3 = Disagree

Source: Fieldwork Data (2017)

Table 3 presents data on the learner factors which influence the academic performance of public JHS students of Ho-West District. Sixty-nine (60%) students and 11 (73%) teachers asserted, whereas 36 (34%) students and 4 (27%) teachers objected that poor attendance (irregularity and lateness) to school affected the academic performance of students. Sixty (63%) students and 11 (73%) teachers agreed while 39 (37%) students and 4 (27%) students disagreed to the statement that poor attitude of students to school and learning affected the academic performance of students. Similarly, 79 (75%) students and 9 (60%) teachers admitted while 26 (25%) students and 6 (40%) teachers disagreed to the statement that truancy by students at home and school affected their academic performance.

Moreover, 70 (67%) students and 8 (53%) teachers affirmed while 35 (33%) students and 5 (33%) teachers disagreed to the statement that laziness by students to learning affected their academic performance. Two (13%) teachers were irresolute with the statement. In addition, 73 (70%) students and 10 (67%) teachers consented while 32 (30%) students and 4 (27%) teachers disagreed to the claim that poor time management affected the academic performance of students. Only 1 (7%) teacher was indecisive. Similarly, 64 (61%) students and 9 (60%) teachers vehemently agreed, whereas 41 (39%) students and 3 (20%) teachers disagreed with the statement that that refusal to do assignments and late submission of work affected the academic performance of students. Three (20%) teachers were irresolute. Seventy-nine (75%) students and 12 (80%) teachers confirmed that bad peer influence affected the academic performance of students. In contrast, 26 (25%) students and 3 (20%) teachers held opposing views. Similarly, 79 (75%) students and 10 (67%) teachers indicated that indiscipline at home and school affects academic performance of students. Twenty-six (25%) students and 4 (27%) teachers objected to this proposition. Only 1 (7%) teacher was irresolute. In response to the question, "What learner factors including students' attitudes to school and learning as well as discipline affect students' academic performance in the school?" the interviewees raised the following issues:

The main learner factors which adversely influence students' academic performance include absenteeism, lateness to school, bad peer group influence and truancy. I believe ineffective counselling partly accounts for retarded academic progress (IHT-1).

Indiscipline by most students is the principal factor which contributes to low academic performance of many students in the schools. Many of the students also spent so much time watching TV. They have less time for books and this does not promote their academic progress. Some of the students are just not serious with school because of the apprehension that there won't be job after school (IHT-2).

Again, interviewee said that a considerable number of the students are lazy. They don't like learning. Some of them play truant because of negative peer influence. Certainly, this affects their academic progress (ICS-1). ICS-2 added that, he strongly think students of this school spent so much time on media and modern communication gadgets. This takes the greater part of their time for studies. It really affects them.

6. Discussion

At discussion section related literature was linked with findings to confirm or disconfirm the respondent's assertions.

6.1. Home Factors that Contribute to Academic Performance

The majority (56% or more) of the respondents pointed out that home factors affected the academic performance of students. It was evident from the results that the dominant home variables which greatly affected students' academic

performance were: unsatisfactory supervision and monitoring of students at home, single parenting, poor socio-economic status of parents, lack of opportunities for extra tuition at home and school, and excessively engaging students in household and child labour activities. Ajila and Olutola's (2007) assertion that the state of the home affects the individual since the parents are the first socializing agents in an individual's life. Other studies by Howley et al. (2000) and House (2002) identified socio-economic status as one of the factors that affect students learning. This finding also corroborated Rothman's (2003) view that students from low-socio-economic status homes are at a disadvantage in schools because they lack an academic home environment, which influences their academic success at school. The implication is that students whose parents were either of relatively very low or low SES would not be able to adequately provide for their children's needs and cater to them. Hence, their wards would find it extremely difficult to get materials for learning. They would virtually not be able to concentrate in class which may eventually lead to disinterest in school and poor academic performance. A difference in parent socioeconomic status due to parental education is most relevant in explaining variation in children's educational achievement. Lack of formal education limits accesses to occupations that provide enough income for an acceptable standard of living. Children whose mothers had lower levels of education tend to score lower on early readiness tests. Other studies by Douglas (1964) as cited by Hess (1975) postulated that, parents who are well educated generally value education and expect their children to become well educated too. Realistically, poverty is persistently linked with lack of and/or low level of formal education.

Also, poverty is relatively linked with low or poor academic performance. Relatively, it is probable that those parents who were self-employed or unemployed would have low levels of income. It seems the low levels of education of respondents' parents limit access to occupations that provide enough income for an acceptable standard of living. Poverty is a precursor to poor academic performance. Given that family economic status is an important determinant of children's education, differences in economic standing of children from low-income families are likely predictor of educational achievement. Children with parents who are both employed are likely to be successful in attaining higher educational achievement. The findings vindicated Obeng-Doi (1983) cited in Alonge (1985), who stated that parents from lower class group find themselves in job areas like masonry, petty trading and small-scale farming. Congalton (1970) further used occupation as his index for ranking people. He demonstrated that one's occupation is determined by one's level of education.

It also unfolds that broken homes and single parenthood are linked to poor academic performance. Reasonably, when parents separate or divorce, children often lose both the psychological (emotional) and financial support, which can directly have a negative impact on the psychosocial and intellectual development of the child. Relatively, children of single-parent families are at a greater risk of not reaching their full academic potentials since they encounter many challenges in their family lives that they bring with them into the classroom. A study by Salami (1998) postulated that adolescents from broken- homes are usually associated with anti-social behaviour and poor academic records. Astone and Mc Lanahan (1991) contended that, single parents tend to have lower level of involvement in children's education - supervision and monitoring of the child's school work, hence lower level of parental involvement among single-parent families is considered to be one major reason for poorer educational outcomes of children with a single parent (McLanahan & S and efur, 1994).

6.2. School Factors that Contribute to Academic Performance

It came to light that between 57% and 77% of the students as well as between 53% and 60% of the teachers averred that school factors contributed to the poor academic performance of students. The observation that large classes affected the academic performance of the students vindicated Cotton's (2001) assertion that specific benefits are associated with smaller schools or class sizes, which invariably lead to higher student achievement. This observation is in line with the findings of Walberg (1992) who also found that schools with smaller class sizes perform better academically than schools with larger class sizes and that school size was the best predictor of higher test scores. Other studies by Kraft (1994) and Wyon (1991) indicated that class sizes above 40 have negative effects on students' achievement and that student performance at mental tasks is affected by changes in temperature.

Again, the revelation that poor motivation for teachers adversely influenced students' academic performance. A study by Lockhead (1991), which showed that lack of motivation and professional commitment produce poor attendance and unprofessional attitudes towards students which in turn affect the performance of the students academically. More so, the revelation that poor motivation for teachers adversely influenced students' academic performance seems to be in consonance with studies by Ofoegbu (2004), Gangoli cited in Igwe (2002), Price water house-Coopers (2001) and Ogunwuyi (2000) who found a significant causal relationship between teachers' unprofessional and negative attitudes such as poor teaching habits and students' achievement, which they attributed to poor motivation. The findings of this study support Stricherz's (2000) claim that students' achievement lag in inadequate school buildings, but suggests there is no hard evidence to prove that students performance rise when facilities improve well beyond the norm. Other studies by Price water house-Coopers (2001) postulated that student achievement lags in shabby school buildings.

The exposure that a poor learning environment relatively affected the academic performance of the students implies that there is a direct link between the teaching and learning environment and students' performance. The interpretation is that the quality of teaching and learning environment would increase the quality of students' learning with a corresponding increase in academic performance. This finding is congruent with a study by Etsey et al. (2005) which showed that teaching and learning environment which is endowed with visual and audio-visual aids, print and electronic materials, books, stationery, classroom furniture, equipment and other teaching/learning materials are vital for effective teaching/learning, and also influence the academic performance of students. Deductively, poor teaching and

learning environment negatively influences the academic performance of students. This finding is consistent with those of Ministry of Education, Ghana (1994), Mwamwanda and Mwamwanda, (1987) which show that the levels of provision of school inputs, textbooks in particular and of other physical facilities in general, are important predictors of academic achievement in schools where these are acutely under-resourced, and that teaching/learning resources influence the academic performance of students.

6.3. Learner Factors That Contribute to Academic Performance

This study unearthed learner factors which mainly accounted for the relatively poor academic achievement by students. It emerges from the result of this study that bad peer influence, indiscipline at home and school, truancy, laziness by students to learning, poor attitude of students to school and learning, and poor attendance (irregularity and lateness) are limiting factors to good academic performance. The exposure that poor attitude to school and learning by students considerably affected their academic performance is consistent with Etsey, Amedahe and Edjah's (2005) observation that students' attitudes such as school attendance (punctuality and/or lateness), absenteeism, regularity in school influence academic performance. Relatively, punctuality or lateness and regularity in school could significantly have an effect on the academic performance of students. The deduction is that if students were always punctual in school, then they could make some time for revision of notes, engage in morning classes and prepare adequately for lessons. This would undoubtedly enhance learning and students' academic achievement. The conviction is that the poor academic performance of some of the students is partly attributable to poor school attendance. The findings further support the observation that, students' attitudes such as language use, interest in teachers' lessons, time with books and studies at home influence academic performance (Etsey, Amedahe&Edjah, 2005).

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of this study:

- Educational achievement is normally attributed to ability, aspiration and opportunity. Variations in academic performance are influenced by the availability, quality and equity in the allocation of socio-cultural factors.
- Variations in academic performance are influenced by the availability, quality and equity in the allocation of socio-cultural factors. Given the findings on the effects of poor socio-economic background of parents on students' academic performance, it should be stated that the study has revealed many factors stemming from poverty as the causes of poor academic performance.
- Poor socio-economic status or background of students is a precursor to students' poor academic performance. Lack of opportunities for extra tuition at home negatively influence students' academic achievement.
- Poor supervision of teachers, poor motivation of teachers, poor teaching methods, student and teacher indiscipline as well as inadequate school infrastructure including teaching/learning materials directly lead to poor academic performance of students.

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forward:

- In order to improve upon academic performance of students in the Ho-West District, parents of public JHS students should try to motivate their children to learn at home and they should provide convenient places for learning at home for their children. Again, parents should not overburden their children with too much household work since it can adversely affect their academic performance. Parents should be educated or made to appreciate the fact that investment in their children's education is the surest means to fight poverty.
- As a way of mitigating the adverse influence of home factors on the academic performance of students, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) should educate parents/guardians to be more committed to their children's education. Single parents should try as much as possible to provide for the physiological and social needs of their wards. This is to help mitigate the exposure to negative peer influence and in disciplinary behaviours.
- Parents, teachers and other stakeholders of education in the district should be more committed to quality education of children by providing adequate school infrastructure, teaching/learning materials and other school needs of children in order to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

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