



# **Perceived School Environmental, Home Conditions and Academic Performance of Junior High School Students in Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, Ghana**

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### **Author's contribution**

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

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceived school environmental and home conditions that are responsible for the poor academic performance of pupils 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 pupils. 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 all the two research questions. The study found that school environmental factors such as inadequate teaching and learning materials, inadequately equipped classrooms for teaching and learning and non-availability of libraries in schools were a major cause of poor academic performance. Again, failure in parents providing breakfast for their children before leaving for school and failure to provide subject textbook is the major home conditions responsible for the poor

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academic achievement of students.

**Conclusion:** It must be emphasised that these factors generally do not operate in isolation. Therefore, improving the academic performance of the students in the Asikuma circuit of Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District schools should involve paying attention to individual issues discussed. It should involve a total package.

*Keywords: Home conditions; school environment; academic performance; poor academic performance; High school students.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as the development of the endowed capacities in the individual, which will enable the one to control his/her environment and fulfil his/her possibilities to a large extent [1]. According to Kimani, Kara and Njagi [2] the purpose of education is to equip the citizenry with values, skills and knowledge to reshape their society and eliminate inequality. Ankomah, Koomson, Bonsu and Oduro [3], found that high academic performance, as measured by the examination results, is one of the major goals of a school. Behind all this is the idea of enhancing good academic performance. This view, however, becomes valid only when students' academic performance is good enough. The social and economic development of the country is directly linked with student academic performance.

The students' performance (academic achievement) plays an important role in producing the best quality students who will become great leaders and manpower for the country. They are thus responsible for the country's economic and social development [4]. Grades awarded to individuals at the end of an academic study are important indicators of ability and productivity when those individuals looking for their first jobs. In fact, a person's education is closely linked to his/her life chances, income and wellbeing [5].

A number of studies have been carried out to identify the factors that affect the academic performance of students in a number of educational institutions worldwide. Most of these studies focus on three elements that intertwine, that is, parents (family causal factors), teachers (academic causal factors), and students (personal causal factors) [6]. The combination of these factors influencing academic performance, however, varies from one academic environment to another, from one set of students to the next,

and indeed from one cultural setting to another [7].

The specific objectives of this study are to find out the role school environmental factors played in students' poor academic performance in Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools and also ascertain home responsible for the poor academic achievement of students in Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Etsey [8] 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 the school environment such as limited teaching and learning materials (TLMs), inadequate textbooks and less professionally trained teachers. Other teacher factors include 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 being hardworking. He further found pupil characteristics such as absenteeism and regularity in school, truancy, use of local language in the classroom, lack of interest and joy in the teacher's lessons and little help with studies at home to also be the cause of poor academic performance in Shama Sub-Metro of Shama Ahanta East Metropolitan Assembly (SAEMA). Etsey [8], again found that parental support variables causing pupils to perform poorly academically were their inability to provide breakfast, textbooks and basic school needs, less interaction with children's teachers and less involvement in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

Over the past years, concerns have been raised about the poor academic performance of pupils in Asikuma District by parents and the community. A study of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results of the schools from 2013 to 2015 buttress this.

**Table 1. B.E.C.E performance of pupils from 2013-2015**

Year	Number of candidates	Aggregates 7-10 (%)	Aggregates 11-20 (%)	Aggregates 26-46 (%)
2013	2399	12 (0.5)	96 (4.0)	1452 (60.5)
2014	2321	10 (0.43)	27 (1.6)	1310 (56.44)
2015	2415	9 (0.37)	338 (14)	1118 (46.2)

Source: Ghana Education Service, AOB District (2016)

From Table 1, it can be seen that in 2013, the district presented 2399 candidates. Out of this number, only 12 candidates had aggregates 7-10 representing 0.5% of the total candidates who wrote the exams. Also, 96 candidates obtained aggregates 11-20 representing 4% of the total candidates. Majority of the candidates 1452, representing 60.5% obtained aggregates 26-46. In 2014, the district presented 2321 candidates. Out of this number, only 10 students obtained aggregate 07-10 representing 0.43%, 27 candidates obtained aggregates 11-20 representing 1.6%. Majority of the candidates, 1310, obtained aggregates 26-46 representing 56.44%. Also, in 2015, the districts presented 2415 candidates. Out of this number, 12 candidates representing 0.5% obtained aggregates 6-10. Also, 338 representing 14% obtained aggregates 11-20. Majority of the candidates, 1118, representing 46.2% obtained aggregates 26-46.

This situation of poor performance in the BECE over the years raises questions about the depth of understanding of factors affecting the low performance of students of Asikuma districts Junior High School (JHS). Gleaning from above, it is very conspicuous that poor academic performance is a phenomenon that needs to be given critical attention, not only looking at it from the generic perspective but looking in detail. The specific factors that are responsible for poor academic performance in each school, because the perceived causes of poor academic performance vary from school to school and environment to environment.

## 1.2 Research Questions

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

1. What school environmental factors were the causes of poor academic performance in the Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools?

2. What were home conditions that caused students in the Asikuma Circuit Junior High Schools to perform poor academically?

## 1.3 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.

## 1.4 Martin Ford's Motivational Theory

The study employed Martin Ford's motivational theory. A direct offspring or subset of Sigmund Freud's theory is Martin Ford's motivational systems theory (MST). This framework focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis, but embeds the individual in the biological, social, and environmental contexts that are crucial to development. The formula proposes that actual "achievement and competence are the results of a motivated, skilful and biologically capable person interacting with a responsive environment" [9,p. 70]. This theory provides the understanding that pupil's performance or achievements are the results of a motivated and skilful student interacting with a responsive environment. Thus, if the school environment, home conditions, teacher factors and pupil's characteristics are favorable, pupils stand a better chance of performing well academically.

## 1.5 Empirical Review

Kawafha [10] in his study to find the impact of skipping breakfast on various educational and overall academic achievements of primary school children in northern Jordan found that skipping breakfast has an association with academic achievement. The result showed a significant and positive partial correlation between breakfast and academic achievement  $r(444) = .313, p < .001$ . The consequences of these problems Kawafha [10] said include; malnutrition that leads to slow children's physical and mental development, increase susceptibility to infections

and reduction in academic achievement. Therefore, skipping breakfast can be considered as a barrier to optimal learning. Despite the fact that the sample was limited to northern Jordan, Kawafha [10] indicated the findings of the study could be generalised to all children worldwide.

A study by Amukowa and Karue [11] set to find out factors affecting performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in day secondary schools in Embu District of Eastern Province, Kenya. The study found out many factors which influenced the negative performance of day secondary school students in Embu District. They further found that home environments of the students and their family backgrounds impacted negatively on their performance. In addition, students were not able to read effectively while at home because they lacked reading materials, they were interfered with friends, family members, poor lighting facilities and noise pollution from neighbours.

Nyandwi [12] in a study to assess factors influencing the poor academic performance of students in Sumbawanga District, Tanzania found that the factors that hampered students' academic performance included the home-based factors such as low income of parents and long walking distance from home to school.

Shamaki [13] also conducted a study in selected secondary schools in Yobe State in Nigeria to determine the influence of learning environment on students' academic performance. According to Shamaki [13], learning environment factors among others included the classroom painting and lighting, seats and sitting arrangement, the classroom climate and air quality or ventilation. Thus, students' academic achievements are tied to these components of the learning environment. This further implies that the quality of lighting and painting influence students' academic performance in mathematics. Shamaki [13] also revealed that poor ventilation must be catered for and equally be discouraged so that the classroom temperature should be kept moderate in order not to hinder quality academic activities. Overcrowding does harm to learning mathematics [13].

Nyandwi [12] also undertook a study to assess factors that influence the academic performance of students of selected secondary schools in Sumbawanga District, Tanzania. The study identified some factors from the school environment such as inadequate

teaching and learning facilities like textbooks and reference books, desks and chairs, inadequate hostels or dormitories, inadequate provision of meals to students, shortage of qualified teachers and a shortage of well-equipped science laboratories. These caused poor academic performance of students in science subjects in most secondary schools of Sumbawanga District.

## 2. 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 of 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 pupils 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. Questionnaire was deemed most appropriate for the study. The questionnaires were designed respectively for school teachers and pupils on factors which were perceived to be affecting academic performance in the school. The questionnaire for teachers was made up of two sections, A and B. 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 home conditions 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 5 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 0.72 and 0.76 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.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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

**Table 2. Gender distribution of teachers**

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

From Table 2, 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 3 above 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 4 sought to find out school related factors causing low academic performance among schools in the Asikuma Circuit. The findings from the study show that school related factors play a

major role in student's poor academic performance. Concerning the first item, thus "How adequately are the teaching and learning materials (TLMs) in school to help in the teaching and learning" majority of the respondents, 11(44%) are of the view that teaching and learning materials are not adequate in the school. Six respondents representing 24% said the TLM's are not available at all, 8(32%) indicated that the TLM's are adequate. The result shows that majority of the respondents confirmed that there are not enough teaching and learning materials (TLMs) in school to help in the teaching and learning. The table shows that majority 11(44%) of the respondents indicated that library is not available in the school, 10 (40%) of the respondents indicated that though they have library, it is not adequate enough to aid teaching and learning. The study revealed that student's poor academic performance could be attributed to an inadequacy of classrooms among the schools in the Asikuma Circuit. From the Table 4, majority 15(60%) of the respondents indicated that the classrooms are not adequately equipped to aid teaching and learning.

**Table 3. Gender distribution of the students**

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

**Table 4. Descriptive analysis of school-related factors causing poor academic performance of students**

Sn	Statements	N	Adequate		Not adequate		Not available	
			Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	How adequate are the teaching and learning materials (TLMs) in your school to help in the teaching and learning?	25	8	32	11	44	6	24
2	How adequately does the school library aid teaching and learning?	25	4	16	10	40	11	44
3	How adequate is the organisation of in-service-training, workshops and seminars for teachers in the school?	25	6	36	14	56	2	8
4	How adequate is the organisation of PTA meetings in the school?	25	20	80	5	20	0	0
5	How adequate are the classrooms equipped for teaching and learning in the school?	25	9	36	15	60	1	4
6	How adequate are the pieces of furniture in the classroom for teaching and learning in the school?	25	9	36	16	64	0	0

**Table 5. Home conditions contributing to students poor academic performance**

SN	Statement	N	Agree	Disagree
		205	F (%)	F (%)
1	My parents do not encourage me to learn	205	50(24)	155(76)
2	My parents do not supervise my homework	205	78(38.2)	126(61.8)
3	My parents' do not attend P.T.A meetings	205	146(71.2)	59(28.8)
4	My Parents do not provide my basic needs for me	204	54(26.5)	150(73.5)
5	My parents do not provide subject textbooks for me	205	139(68)	66(32)
6	My parents provide breakfast for me before I leave for school	205	83(40.5)	122(59.5)
7	My parents make me sell after school hours	204	69(33.8)	135(66.2)
8	My parents make me go to farm after school hours	205	37(18)	168(81.9)

Table 5 clearly shows that majority 155(76%) of the pupils indicated that their parents encourage them to learn. It can be concluded from the above findings that parents encourage their ward concerning their education. Furthermore, concerning whether their parents attend P.T.A meeting, majority 146(71.2%) indicated that their parents did not attend P.T.A meetings. Again, on the issue of whether parents provided their wards with subjects textbooks, majority 139(68%) of the respondent indicated that their parent does not provide them with subjects textbooks. The pupils were also asked whether their parents provide breakfast for them before they leave for school. Majority 122(59.5%) indicated that their parent does not provide breakfast for them before leaving for school.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study examined the perceived school environmental and home conditions that were responsible for the low academic achievement of pupils in Asikuma circuit of Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. Factors related to school environment, and home conditions were found to be contributing to poor academic performance of the pupils in Asikuma circuit. These factors include inadequate teaching and learning materials, inadequate classrooms for teaching and learning, lack of library to aid teaching and learning, classrooms are not adequately equipped to aid teaching and learning, poor parental involvement in PTA meetings, parents not providing pupils with the subject textbook and breakfast.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the research; Ghana Education Service in Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District should provide the Asikuma circuit schools with the adequate teaching and learning materials,

adequate classrooms for teaching and learning. This will help them read more thereby promoting good performance.

Also, it is recommended that parents in Asikuma circuit should be encouraged to try their possible best to provide breakfast for their children every morning before leaving to school, as this will help student concentrate during instructional sessions.

Furthermore, parents should provide subject textbook for their children as this will help improve their academic performance.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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