



## **Factors Responsible for Pupils' Low Academic Performance in Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District, Ghana**

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**Abstract:** This study dealt with factors responsible for pupils' low academic performance in Abura-asebu-Kwamankese District in Ghana, using the study employed the descriptive survey design. The study selected twelve basic schools with low performance as sample. The sample size included 12 head teachers, 96 teachers and 36 parents. The study used both a questionnaire and interview schedule to collect data. Descriptive statistics analyzed the quantitative data while the qualitative data took place thematically. The study established that numerous factors affected students' academic achievement. These include elements from home and school environments and concerns relating to teachers. Parents' level of education, family structure and socioeconomic status are important factors in determining pupils' performance. Particularly, class size and teachers' motivation played significant roles in the teaching and learning process. There is a need for stakeholders' cooperation to strengthen pupils' learning environments for pupils to realize expected performance. Parents should enhance their children's education by fostering conducive environments at home. Furthermore, parents should maintain frequent interaction with teachers to establish the progress of their children at school and provide appropriate support in collaboration with teachers. The district needs to employ additional teachers to reduce chances for large class sizes. Finally, circuit supervisors should enhance their oversight to ensure strict adherence to instructional practices and educational standards.

**Keywords:** Home factors; school environmental factors; teacher factors; performance; motivation.

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### **Introduction**

The necessity of national capacity for growth is widely recognized in light of the expanding scope of globalization and the continuous improvements in technology. Taher and Arifen (2000) assert that over time, the significance of the human component in achieving national and organizational goals has grown due to heightened competition and internationalization of economies. In contemporary

times, individuals employed in organizations are widely recognized as primary drivers of production and service provision, (Torres & Schugurensky, 2002). Scholars such as Mullins (2007) and Haslinda (2009) emphasized the significance of human resources in the context of development.

The notion that education plays a significant role in fostering enhanced citizenship and elevating the

overall quality of life within a society is widely acknowledged (Analoui, 2018). According to Jeynes (2007), the involvement of families in children's education is positively associated with higher academic performance levels and improved behavior. This is attributed to the notion that learning initiates within the home environment through interactions with one's family. According to Jubber (1988), there is an expectation that children whose parents have a higher level of education are more inclined to excel academically, in contrast to children whose parents have a lower level of education. According to Khan et al. (2015), there exists a belief that the level of importance parents place on education has the potential to influence a child's attitude towards school, thereby affecting their motivation to succeed academically. The family, functioning as a primary agent of socialization is commonly regarded as having a significant influence on a children's ambition to attain success. The motivation to succeed in academic endeavors is a powerful catalyst, a compelling impetus or a strong desire to attain favorable outcomes and acknowledgment, hence contributing to high levels of academic achievement (Mpiluka, 2014).

Parents exhibit variations in their individual characteristics, encompassing both their interactions with their children and their feelings or responses pertaining to their children's education. Individuals possess unique backgrounds, distinct concerns and personal challenges pertaining to child-parent interactions, and inherent tensions. According to Bryan (2005), there exists variations among parents in their ability to establish a connection with their children. While some parents exhibit warmth and support, others may display rejection or negligence. While certain parents possess high levels of intelligence and competence, others may lack formal education, literacy skills and ability to comprehend complex problems related to their children (Nichols, 2017). While certain individuals hold education in high esteem, others perceive it as a compulsory obligation mandated by both legal and societal norms (Brown, 1990).

Based on the findings of the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (2008), it is evident that pupils in the deprived areas in the central region of Ghana are not achieving the minimum learning standards and are struggling to gain fundamental skills and competencies. This statement underscores the fact that addressing the

problem of low performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) is imperative. The academic community has recognized that the performance of learners serves as a crucial measure of the quality of education. Consequently, the underperformance of learners at the elementary level has not only sparked public concerns but has also prompted educators to dedicate more attention to discerning factors that impact student performance, particularly in Ghana's Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE).

Anamuah-Mensah (2010), an education scholar, linked the occurrence to insufficient supervision and monitoring inside educational institutions, a dearth of teacher motivation, and an inadequate supply of trained teachers to meet the demands of classes with vacant positions. Despite the diligent endeavors of the Government of Ghana (GoG) to enhance the quality of the country's educational system, apprehensions persist over the standard of primary education in regions like the Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese (AAK) District. Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District Assembly (2017) highlighted concerns on the performance of children in Basic Education Certificate Examinations, lack of effective Parent Teacher Associations in some school communities and poor performance of certain teachers. According to the report, the Assembly's efforts of informing stakeholders, such as schools, teachers, homes and community members, about their roles in children's education in the district has not yet produced the desired outcomes. This study sought to establish factors contributing to academic performance of basic school students in Ghana, using the Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District as a case.

## **Literature Review**

This part presents the review of related literature and studies about concepts in the study.

### **Home Factors sand Academic Performance**

A variety of household circumstances might exert an influence on a children's academic success in schools. Possible influencing factors on children's success include socio-economic position, home size, family structure and the extent of parental involvement and interest. According to Engin-Demir (2009), children's academic achievement is affected by familial background factors, such as the financial level of parents. Schiller et al. (2002) argued that parents with higher levels of education possess a greater capacity to

offer their children the necessary academic and social assistance that plays a crucial role in academic achievement, as opposed to parents with lower levels of education.

There is a positive correlation between higher family income and learners' higher academic achievement (Hanushek, 1992). Asikhia (2010) asserts that students coming from economically disadvantaged households are compelled to discontinue their education and instead participate in street vending activities, such as hawking and selling packaged drinking water, in order to accumulate funds for their educational expenditures.

Literature reveals that the quantity of siblings a student has may exert an impact on his or her academic performance (Zhao & Bodovski, 2020). As family size increases, parents may have less attention and dedication to allocate to each child, resulting in more challenges in satisfying the children's physical and emotional requirements (Asikhia, 2010; Adane, 2013). The presence of a larger number of children within a household is associated with fewer beneficial results for the children. Previous research has indicated that children who come from larger families tend to experience less positive home situations and exhibit lower levels of verbal proficiency (Parcel & Menagham, 1994). Additionally, these children have been reported to have the highest rates of behavioral difficulties and poorer levels of educational attainment (Downey, 1995).

In this particular context, a shattered family refers to a family unit that lacks structural integrity due to a range of factors, such as the demise of a parent, divorce, separation, abandonment, or the absence of a formal union, as in the case of illegitimacy (Coukline, 1996). Families in such circumstances encounter several difficulties, including reduced financial means, adoption of new roles and duties, development of new dynamics in family interactions and restructuring of routines and schedules (Agulanna, 1999). The prevailing circumstances are not conducive to the facilitation of good parenting as single parent experience an array of tasks and emotional issues that limit their support to children. The aforementioned circumstances do not provide a favorable atmosphere for achievement of scholarly success (Nzewunwah, 1995 as cited in Uwaifo, 2008).

A study by Berthelot et al (2001) revealed a noteworthy correlation between pupils whose

parents are engaged in school activities and their scholastic achievements. Thus, students with more involved parents in their education are more likely to succeed academically. Parent-child relationships foster physical, emotional, and social growth. Every child and parent will cherish this unique link. This relationship shapes the child's personality, life choices, and behavior. Moreover, research has demonstrated that parental involvement in education has a crucial role in enhancing the academic performance of learners. Conway and Houtenwille (2008) conducted a study, which revealed that the combination of parental enthusiasm in schooling and socio-psychological characteristics served as reliable indicators for predicting students' academic achievements in the English language. A study by Ghanney (2007) discovered that a favorable parental attitude towards education, along with strong parental support and interest have a greater impact on children's educational success compared to the level of the parents' own educational achievements.

### **School-Related Factors that Influence Academic Performance**

Numerous school factors may exert an influence on academic success. These factors may include accessibility to educational resources, geographical placement, quality of the physical infrastructure, the number of learners per class, ratio of students to teachers and qualifications and level of experience possessed by the teachers.

Research has shown that learners tend to exhibit enhanced academic performance when they have access to educational resources such as books or study aids that support the learning process. Study aids or material resources encompass a variety of educational tools, such as textbooks, teachers' guides, and visual aids, including wall pictures, maps, atlases and other supplementary materials designed to facilitate learning.

According to Harbison and Hanushek (1992), there exists a favorable correlation between the quality of physical facilities and students' achievement. This supports the findings of Danesty (2004, as cited in Yinusa & Basil, 2008), which revealed a positive correlation between favorable seating arrangements and well-maintained buildings with high academic achievements. According to Isangedighi (1998), the unappealing physical architecture of the school facility may have a negative impact on students' academic motivation.

Class size may influence academic achievement. Particularly, educational institutions characterized by smaller class sizes exhibit superior academic performance compared to those characterized by bigger class sizes (Adeyela, (2000).

### **Teacher-Side Factors that Influence Academic Performance**

There are various aspects related to teachers that have an impact on academic success. These include school attendance, interest and motivation of teachers, as well as the efficacy of methods employed in teaching. Teachers' absenteeism led to limited achievement of primary school learners in Ghana (Nunoo et al., 2023; World Bank, 2004). The World Bank further revealed a decline in the percentage of schools unaffected by teacher absences, which highly affected the achievement of learners. Saviour et al., (2022) revealed a correlation between students' subpar academic achievement and the inadequate performance of teachers. Sancassani's (2023) study agreed with Darling-Hammond (2000) which revealed a strong and positive correlation between teacher quality attributes, such as certification status and subject-specific degrees and academic performance in the fields of science and mathematics.

## **Research Methods**

### **Research Design**

The study design was descriptive survey. Since respondents' views are the only data, it is a design that gathers information without verifying the behavior. This tool can analyze large and small population studies. The authors chose this strategy since the survey collected data solely from respondents' perspectives.

### **Population and Sampling**

The district has 98 basic schools. Out of the total basic public schools in the district, twelve with low performance in the BECE results were purposefully selected for the study. Eight teachers from each school participated using the lottery method, while twelve head teachers were purposively involved in the study. Again, 36 parents who had their children in the selected schools (three from each selected school) participated in the study. In all, 144 respondents, comprised of 12 head teachers, 96 teachers and 36 parents, were involved in the study.

### **Instruments**

The study used both a questionnaire and interview schedule to collect data. The questionnaire gathered

data from teachers and head teachers whilst the interview guide collected data from parents. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages analyzed the quantitative data while the analysis for qualitative data took place thematically.

### **Validity**

The researchers designed the instruments to cover all the research questions to establish validity comprehensively. In addition, the researchers sought the experts' opinions to improve the quality of the questionnaire.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Participation in the study was voluntary, and only those who gave active consent concerning participation and data usage participated. The researchers ensured the participants that their responses would remain confidential and only be work for academic purposes. They also ensured total anonymity and confidentiality.

## **Results and Discussion**

This section deals with the analyses and discussions of data obtained from respondents in the study. It begins with analysis respondents' demographics and then it addresses the research questions in the study.

### **Demographics of Respondents**

On the sex distribution of the respondents, the majority were males (69.4%) while 30.6% were females. On the issue of educational qualifications of the teachers and head teachers, it became evident that 64.2% had a Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSSCE) while 26.5% had a Diploma in Basic Education and 9.3% had bachelor degree. The majority of the respondents (64.2%) had educational qualifications lower than a Diploma in Education. Teachers who have lower qualifications may not possess the essential depth of subject knowledge and pedagogical skills to properly communicate concepts to pupils. This can lead to less engaging lessons, worse explanations, and restricted ability to adapt to different learning styles. The findings confirm the study conducted by Hyde and Kabiru (2003) that most of the teachers at the basic schools in Africa do not have the needed qualifications. In Ghana the needed qualification is at least Diploma in basic education.

The educational qualifications of parents showed that 67% had Middle School Levers Certificate (MSLC) /Basic Education Certificate Examination

(BECE), 24.7% had Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and 8.3% had a diploma or bachelor degree. Furthermore, 54.6% of the teachers were between 25 and 34 years old, 27.4% were between 35 and 44 years old and 18% were above 45 years old. For parents, 56.5% were between 25 and 34 years old, 33.5% were between 35 and 44 years old whilst 9.0% were above 45 years old. Although experience is vital, younger teachers and parents can offer new viewpoints and a deep understanding of current educational methodologies. They may possess a higher level of skill in incorporating technology into the process of

teaching and learning, which might be advantageous for pupils learning.

**Research Question 1:** What is the perception of respondents on home factors that influence pupils' performance?

The first research question sought to establish home factors that affect the performance of pupils. The respondents were head teachers, and teachers. The responses appear in table one from the highest to the lowest scored factor.

**Table 1: Views of Respondents on Home-Related Factors that Influence Pupils' Performance**

Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Parents' educational level	25	23.1
A broken family	24	22.2
Family structure	18	16.7
Socioeconomic status of parents	16	14.8
Family size	15	13.9
Parents' expectation and attribution	10	9.3
Total	108	100

The respondents identified parents' educational level (23.1%) as the highest scored factor that influence the performance of pupils. Other factors included broken families (22.2%), family structure (16.7%), socioeconomic status (14.8%), family size (13.9%), and parents' expectations and attributions (9.3%).

Interviews with parents revealed similar factors leading to pupils' performance. For instance, parents revealed that due to their low level of education, they sometimes find it difficult to understand their role in supporting their children's education. A parent lamented, "I haven't been to school myself, so if they bring something from the school, I can't read to understand what it is, I have to get somebody in the community to help the child..... this sometimes become very difficult." Another parent stated, "Our parents didn't send us to school, but we are working in our farms, if they don't want the school, they join us in our farms...." The respondents also bemoaned that broken homes, socio-economic factors including low income and unemployment played a role affecting the performance of pupils.

Other home factors include the size of the household, type of discipline at home and the level of parental involvement and interest in child

schooling. One parent intimated, "Our non-involvement in the homework and other assignments of our children causes low performance of our children."

These findings are similar to those by Christenson et al. (1992) that home factors such as parents' expectation and attribution, home environment and parental involvement affected the performance of pupils. Similarly, Engin-Demir (2009) revealed that family characteristics such as education level, income, and occupation can have a profound impact on pupils' performance. For instance, parents with higher level of education understand the need to provide their children with the needed support in their education. The studies of Asikhia (2010) and Fahle et al. (2023) revealed that learners coming from economically disadvantaged homes are compelled to discontinue their education and instead participated in street vending activities, such as selling bottled drinking water in order to accumulate funds for their educational expenses. The understanding that home-related factors affect students' academic performance emphasizes the importance of encouraging positive home environments, parental involvement in education, and addressing socioeconomic inequalities to

ensure equal academic opportunities for all children.

**Research Question 2:** What is the perception of respondents on school environmental factors that influence pupils' performance?

The second objective of this study looked at the school environmental factors responsible for pupils' low academic performance in the District as appears in Table 2. The teachers and head teachers identified large class sizes (27.8%) as major school environment factors that contribute to pupils' low

academic performance in the district, while leadership style (7.4%) and ineffective supervision (7.4%) as the least contributing factors. This is followed by the results from the interview. Furthermore, parents revealed that poor physical facilities and inadequate qualified teachers were responsible for poor pupils' performance in the District. For instance, one parent intimated that "most schools in the District did not have adequate qualified teachers coupled with inadequate TLRs all of which compound the situation in terms of pupils' performance."

**Table 2: School Environmental Factors that Cause Pupils' Low Academic Performance**

Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Large class size	30	27.7
Inadequate qualified teachers	18	16.7
Poor physical facilities	16	14.8
Unavailable teaching and learning resources (TLRs)	14	13.0
Inadequate in-service education and training for teachers	14	13.0
Leadership style	8	7.4
Ineffective supervision	8	7.4
Total	108	100

**Table 3: Teacher factors that cause low Pupils' performance in the District**

Reason	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teachers' interest and motivation	30	27.8
Teacher punctuality in class	26	24.1
Methods of delivery of teachers	18	16.7
Inadequate teacher professional development	18	16.7
Teacher attendance	16	14.8
Total	108	100

Furthermore, some parents indicated that factors in the school such as availability of instructional materials, school location and quality of the physical facilities, class size and pupil-teacher ratios, teacher qualification and experience and supervision are possible cause of low pupils' performance. One parent said, "Supervision in the schools here is very poor, so teachers decide to do what they like." Another parent stated, 'Some of the schools' structures are not motivating enough to the pupils.' The responses showed that large class size does not help to ensure favorable learning for pupils as teachers struggle to meet the individual learning needs of the many pupils in the class.

Many school environmental factors including availability of instructional materials, school location and quality of the physical facilities, class size and pupil-teacher ratios, teacher qualification and experience and supervision affect pupils' performance. For instance, Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) show that instructional materials provide information, organize the scope and sequence of

the information presented, and provide opportunities for pupils to use what they have learned. Students usually perform better when they have books or study aids to foster their learning. These study aids or material resources may include textbooks, teachers' guides, wall pictures, maps, atlases, and other learning aids. The availability and use of teaching and learning materials affect the effectiveness of a teacher's lessons. In addition, the school location and quality of the physical building influence the performance and achievement levels of pupils.

Class sizes are a determinant of academic performance. Studies have shown that schools with smaller class sizes perform better academically than schools with larger class sizes (Agasisti et al., 2021; Blatchford & Russell, 2020; Deng et al., 2020). Fabunmi et al. (2007) found factors such as class size, students' classroom space, and class utilization rate determined students' academic performance in Oyo state, Nigeria. Adeyela (2000) found that large class size is uncondusive for serious academic work.

Again, schools with effective supervision of activities have high-performance rates. It must be noted that, underprivileged students facing academic challenges may experience greater difficulties in larger class sizes. In the absence of assistance and adequate resources, these pupils may lag behind, hence exacerbating disparities in achievement.

**Research Question 3:** What is the perception of respondents on teacher factors that influence pupils' performance?

Finally, the study sought to explore the teacher factors that cause pupils' low academic performance. The results from the questionnaire and interview schedule appear in Table 3 where teacher factors such as teachers' interest and motivation (27.8%) account for the highest factor, whereas teacher attendance (14.8%) is the lowest factor responsible for low pupils' performance in the district.

The interviewees generally confirmed that the listed factors in table 3 are some of the teacher factors that cause low pupils' performance in the district. Other factors identified by the interviewees who were involved in the study included teachers living long distances from schools and experiencing transportation difficulties; teachers having to travel to town once a month to access their salary which may or may not have arrived, is another factor. Other factors include rural teachers engaging in farming activities. The following are expressions of parents: "Some of the teachers even farm more than us, we don't even know if they teach our kids at school."

One parent lamented, "... we don't have a bank in this village, and the teacher who stays in our house will always travel to the nearby town for her salary... we hope we can get a bank in this village, so that our teachers won't be leaving almost every month...this has affected their punctuality in school." Another parent stated, "some of the teachers do not stay in this village...., and you know that our roads are not good, so they sometimes come to school late, and even sometimes absent themselves from school." This finding confirms the World Bank's (2004) observation that teacher regularity and punctuality in school are critical with regard to both children's access to education and the nature of that access. However, the prevailing evidence is that teachers' absenteeism appears to have worsened in the last fifteen years (Mensah, 2022; World Bank, 2004).

## Conclusions and recommendations

### Conclusions

In conclusion, numerous factors affect students' academic achievement. These include elements from home and school environments and concerns relating to teachers. Parents' level of education, family structure and socioeconomic status are important factors in determining pupils' performance. Particularly, class size and teachers' motivation play significant roles in the teaching and learning process, which may affect the rate of students' performance.

### Recommendations

There is a need for stakeholders' cooperation to strengthen pupils' learning environments for pupils to realize expected performance. Parents should enhance their children's education by fostering conducive environments at home. They should allocate time for assisting their children in doing their homework, provide required educational resources and display supportive attitude towards learning. Furthermore, parents should maintain frequent interaction with teachers to establish the progress of their children at school and provide appropriate support in collaboration with teachers. The district needs to employ additional teachers to reduce chances for large class sizes. Finally, circuit supervisors should enhance their oversight to ensure strict adherence to instructional practices and educational standards.

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