

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' CLASS ATTENDANCE AND  
THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: THE CASE OF JUNIOR HIGH  
SCHOOLS IN THE KUMASI METROPOLIS

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BY

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This thesis submitted to the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration of the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy Degree in Educational Administration.

NOVEMBER 2010

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

*I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.*

Candidate Signature: ..... Date.....

Name: Gloria Nyame

### Supervisors' Declaration

*We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.*

Principal Supervisor's Signature ..... Date.....

Name: Dr. A. L. Dare

Co- Supervisor's Signature ..... Date.....

Name: Mr. S. K. Atakpa

## ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between students' class attendance and their academic performance. To this end, four research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive surveys were employed for the study. A special form was designed to collect data on class attendance and academic performance from 1800 students who formed the unit of analyses. Relevant data gathered were used to test 4 hypotheses. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation were used to analyze data in the quest for testing the research hypotheses. The hypotheses were subjected to Pearson's product moment correlation co-efficient test and the t-distribution test at an alpha level of  $p < 0.05$  for determining the strength, direction and the significance of the relationships involved in the variables

The study revealed different degrees of relationships between all the variables tested without any having zero relationship. Students' class attendance and academic performance were statistically significant on location of a school, level of academic performance and class attendance respectively. However, statistically significant difference in performance of male and female students was not caused by class attendance.

Among others, it was recommended that educational authorities should come out with effective measures of ensuring students regular attendance in schools because there is a critical link between effective educational strategies and students attendance rates.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I must confess that my dear husband Kankam Boadu deserves millions of gratitude. He provided expert advice with useful criticisms and suggestions, financial support and spiritual inspiration for me to finish the study on time.

My lovely children Yaw, Ama and Akwasi deserve applause for bearing with me to pursue this study. May God richly bless them.

It must be noted however, that I am solely responsible for shortcomings that may be found in this work.

I will never forget you, Isaac Atta Kwenin, for your zeal to also finish this work on time. May God richly bless you.

## **DEDICATION**

To my uncle, Very Rev. Kofi Amponsah, my husband Kankam Boadu and my children Yaw, Ama and Akwasi.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background to the Study**

The education system of every country aim at developing the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the citizenry that is equipping the individuals with knowledge, skills attitudes and values with the view to promoting the development of one's country (Harbison & Hanushek, 1992). Development in whatever form needs educated people. Therefore, education is development. Education offers a new life and chances for people, decreases the double-problem of poverty and strengthens a voice in society. Against this background, attending school becomes most critical to every country's development.

Realizing the importance of education, when the Portuguese first arrived in Ghana, the then Gold Coast, they established a school in the 1840's in Elmina (McWilliam, 1962). The Portuguese King, John III made provision for the teaching of the Africans around the castle at Edina (Elmina). The Dutch, Danes and the British all came to Ghana, and set up their own type of education until the British finally entrenched themselves with their type of education. Different governors of the British governing the Gold Coast have provided educational ordinances which one way or the other have had some significant influence on the entire educational system in Ghana (Antwi, 1992).

The missionaries also engaged themselves in the spread of formal education. For instance, the Basel missionaries from Switzerland, the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries as well the Bremen of the North German missionaries, all engaged in the spread of education in Ghana. Records show that in 1850, the Basel and Wesleyan Methodists missions were educating children at their respective schools in the three R's (Reading, Arithmetic, and Writing) (Acheampong & Stephens, 2000).

In the school system, it is required that both the teacher and students are kept in a permanent school walls as in the case of the Western education (Marah, 2006). With the structured and permanent walls, it is expected that both teachers and learners are kept in constant touch for effective supervision and observation. This calls for the regular attendance of both the teacher and students. Increasing students' attendance and reducing unauthorized absence are currently high on the Government's education agenda. Admittedly, improving the level of school attendance is one of the critical factors in the Government's strategy to raise educational standards.

When children attend school on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. The more time they spend around other children, whether in the classroom or as part of a school team or club, the more chance they have of making lots of friends and feeling included, boosting social skills, confidence and self esteem.

Even with the process of traditional education, before the advent of formal education, where training was intimately integrated with the social, cultural, artistic, religious and recreational life of the ethnic groups (Marah, 2006), it required some constant observation and regular attendance between the trainer and the trainee. For instance, where girls were socialized to effectively learn the roles of motherhood, wife, and other sex-appropriate skills, their punctual and regular observation was required for effective learning. However, the participation in full force is yet to be established.

Growing numbers of teachers in the second cycle institutions in Ghana have expressed concern that students are becoming uninterested in their class because of their commitments in non-academic activities outside the school. Anderson (1988) stressed that absenteeism disturbs the dynamic teaching-learning environment and adversely affects the overall “well being of classes”. Acknowledging the severity of the absenteeism problems, educators are exploring creative techniques to increase class attendance, such as innovative teaching methods and better equipped classroom.

In Ghana, since 1987, basic reforms have seen gross enrolment ratios (GER) at primary school level shoot up by about 37% (Acheampong, 2009) but the gains in student achievement expected from overall reforms has been unimpressive. Yearly criterion reference tests (CRT) which began in 1992, and were designed to monitor progress in student achievement following the reforms paint a picture of continuing under-achievement and a very slow rate of progress. Other studies have confirmed that indeed a significant part of the problems have

to be with the quality of teachers and students attendance (Aseidu-Akrofi, 1978 & Anderson, 1988).

Internationally, there is considerable evidence to suggest that class attendance levels are moderately related to academic performance (Davedoss & Foltz, 1996; Park & Kerr, 1990). Some researchers argue that attendance is merely a proxy for student motivation (Durden & Ellis, 1995) although Romer (1993) found a statistically significant relationship between performance and attendance after controlling for motivation. Romer found in his study that a student who attended only a quarter of the classes on an average earned a C-grade, while a student who attended all of the classes earned a B+.

In some cases too, teacher attendance to class may impact either positively or negatively to student achievement. A comparison of achievement scores between students with high and low teacher absence rates yielded statistically significant differences. Students with high and low teacher attendance rates scored an average of two to three NCE points higher than students attending classes with low teacher attendance rates.

Executive Summary (1998) on the analysis of the relationship between student and teacher attendance rates and student achievement suggested that poor teacher attendance combined with poor student attendance yielded the lowest scores followed by poor student attendance alone and poor teacher attendance alone. Thus, poor teacher attendance alone appeared to have the smallest impact on student achievement.



In the basic schools in Ghana, especially those found in the coastal areas and those located in the commercial towns, most students engage in commercial activities for the reasons best known to them. Owusu (1987) revealed that in Kumasi (Ghana) 44% of the juveniles who escaped from schools and went to early employment actually needed money to buy textbooks, school uniforms or to pay for their school fees. He mentioned that 27% engage in trading in order to supplement the household budget.

Danesy and Okediran (2002) lamented that street hawking among school students have psychologically imposed other problems like sex networking behaviour, juvenile delinquent behaviour which takes much of the student time that necessitated the poor academic performance and drop out syndrome. Once they are engaging in commercial activities the opportunity cost will be the forgoing of their regular classes, since the two cannot be enjoyed concurrently. It is obvious that students gain financially once they engage in commercial activities but can this also be said of achieving academic excellence? There has not been empirical evidence as to how students' attendance in class affects their academic achievement, especially in the area under study. This calls for concern, hence the choice of this topic.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Student absenteeism is a major concern for educators at all academic institutions. White (1992) noted that absenteeism disturbs the dynamic teaching-learning environment and adversely affects the overall well being of a class. Several factors influence attendance and achievement. Some of these factors are

motivation, prior grade point average (GPA), self-financing by learners, hours worked on jobs, quality of teaching and nature of class lectures (Romer, 1993).

Kumasi Metropolis is a commercial centre where students engage themselves in a number of commercial activities either in the morning or in the afternoon before attending school. The media of late have been discussing the academic performance of such students who spend part of their time in class and part on the street selling. A comment made by one of the parents of such students during a phone-in-programme was that their wards after all would copy notes from colleagues when unable to attend class. Such a comment seems to suggest that parents do not really value student regular attendance in class. Even if they do, they might not be aware of the relationship that exists between school attendance and students' performance. It is yet to be found out whether it is the majority of parents and guardians who want their wards to engage in commercial activities. It is obvious that students gain financially in their commercial activities, but can this be said of students' academic gains? This empirical study compares the students' school attendance and academic performance with special reference to students close to and far away from commercial centres. There has not been any empirical study in the area of study, hence, the gap in the literature to be filled.

### **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The purpose of the study was to find out whether there existed a relationship between students' class attendance and their academic performance. Specifically the objectives are to:

1. determine the relationship between students' school attendance and academic performance of students in JHS.
2. investigate into class attendance and academic performance with respect to gender.
3. investigate into class attendance and the performance of students in schools close to commercial centres and schools far from commercial centres.
4. find out the attendance of students with average academic score and above as well as students below the average academic score.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. Ho: There is no significant relationship between students' school attendance and academic performance.  
Hi: There is significant relationship between students' school attendance and academic performance.
2. Ho: There is no significant relationship in academic performance and class attendance between male and female students in JHS.  
Hi: There is significant relationship in academic performance and class attendance between male and female students in JHS.
3. Ho: There is no significant relationship between class attendance and academic performance of students in schools near commercial centres and those not close to commercial centres.

Hi: There is significant relationship between class attendance and academic performance of students in schools near commercial centres and those not close to commercial centres.

4. Ho: There is no significant relationship between class attendance of students with average scores and above and students below the average score.

Hi: There is significant relationship between class attendance of students with average scores and above and students below the average score.

### **Significance of the Study**

The investigation of the relationship between attendance and achievement might assist educators in planning the implementation of future school programmes within the public school setting. Although the findings will be specifically beneficial to Ghana, other school systems seeking information on the relationship between students' class attendance and academic achievement might find the results of this study useful. The study will inform policy makers about the effect of attendance on student performance so that appropriate policies will be put in place to curtail absenteeism in schools.

It will also help parents and guardians to know the effect of absenteeism on their wards' performance. This will prompt them to put appropriate measures in place to ensure regularity in attendance.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

Delimitation has to do with the scope, or boundaries of the research. This study is delimited to the Kumasi Metropolis which is the capital town or city of Ashanti Region. It is also called Oseikrom (Osei's town) named after its founder, King Osei Tutu in 1695 (Kofigah, 2008). The city of Kumasi is almost centrally located in Ghana and like other commercial cities in Ghana, Kumasi is full of many commercial activities and many garage dealings which are likely to attract many school children to engage in economic activities. Owusu (1987) revealed that in Kumasi (Ghana) 44% of the juveniles who escape schools and go to early employment actually need money to buy textbooks, school uniforms or to pay for their school fees. He mentioned that 27% engage in trading in order to supplement the household budget. These facts and figures made Kumasi an interesting choice for the present study. Moreover, the researcher was familiar with the geographical demarcations of the area and could therefore get easy access to data.

The study covered all students in the public JHS in Kumasi Metropolis recorded in their class register and their continuous assessment scores which were used as a proxy for academic performance.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations are those conditions beyond the control of the researcher that will place restrictions on the conclusions of the study and their application to other situations (Best & Khan, 1996). In this respect, any situation such as lack of finance, inadequacy of time, bureaucratic rules to be followed when conducting research in certain organizations or institutions and the level of co-operation of

the respondents can be part of the limitations. The nature of this study establishes associations or relationships between variables but does not explain causal effects between and among variables which is a limitation to this study because one cannot conclude that a particular variable is a cause or an effect of change in another variable.

Another limitation that the researcher faced had to do with some schools' unwillingness to release vital records for the exercise. For instance, after four consecutive visits to a particular school, the teachers were a bit hesitant to provide the needed data with the excuse that a heavy rainfall had destroyed their records. Some schools were also reluctant to release information for they associated the data collection exercise as having political implications.

Again, the scattered nature of schools in the Metropolis affected easy movement and therefore made movement to the selected schools very difficult for the researcher and so, prolonged the collection of data from 2<sup>nd</sup> November to 7<sup>th</sup> December 2009 .During this period, commercial activities were in their peak because of the Christmas festivities and that attracted a lot of students from school or put their minds off academic performance to the streets to engage in one commercial activity or the other for financial gains. This in a way affected the data collected since it prolonged the collection period of the data and can affects its credibility.

### **Definition of Terms and Acronyms**

**Student attendance:** It is the total number of days a student attended school as a function of the total number of days the student could have attended school.

**Official document:** Anything written, photographed or recorded by an organization or institution e.g. class registers.

**Academic performance:** This can be defined as a good achievement as a result of teaching and learning in all academic discipline as well as in co-curricular activities.

**BECE:** Basic Education Certificate Examination

**GER:** Gross Enrolment Ratio

**CRT:** Criterion Referenced Tests

**GPA:** Grade Point Average

**USDOE:** United States Department of Education

**EOC:** End of Course

**MOESS:** Ministry Of Education Science and Sports

### **Organization of the rest of the Thesis**

The study is organized and presented in five chapters including this chapter. Chapter Two contains review of the related literature to student attendance and academic performance. Chapter Three provides a discussion of the methodology and the data collection procedures for the study.

Chapter Four presents the data and describes the data analysis used for the study. Chapter Five presents a summary of the study, summary of the findings, conclusions, recommendations for practice and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Chapter two contains a review of the literature relevant to student's school attendance and achievement. Literature is reviewed in the area of:

1. The Historical Development of the concept of Academic performance.
2. Student's school attendance and academic performance and academic performance.
3. Factors influencing student's school attendance,
4. The relationship between school attendance and academic performance,
5. Drop out and non-attendance,
6. Absenteeism in schools and academic performance,
7. Factors influencing students' academic performance,
8. Academic achievement of students with good school attendance,
9. Academic achievements of students with poor school attendance,
10. Sex differences on class attendance and academic performance.

#### **The Historical Development of the Concept of Academic Performance**

Academic performance has got a historical underpinning. From 1846, pupil teachers were been paid following the results of an annual examination. This mode of payment is more popularly known as 'payment by results' (Hogg, 1990). Hogg further said that teachers' successes were, however, rated on the



performance of children in the annual examination. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, more scientific methods of testing school children began to be developed in the United States of America, France and the United Kingdom (while there were critics, especially among teachers). Testing was widespread between the two world wars yet, confidence in assessment began to wane (Hogg, 1990).

Cummings and Riddell (1992) revealed that the International Association for the Evaluation Achievement has been carrying through a testing long time ago. They again said that the first effort made by the association was limited to testing in Mathematics, because it was presumed at that time to have a test material which was not likely to suffer from cultural variation. On the part of Carr-Hill and Magnussen (1973) no clear set of educational goals were available and that it was difficult to get a base where indicators of performance could be derived. Ruby (1989), suggested the following reasons for renewed policy interest in performance indicators:

- (a) a concern to improve the country's international economic competitiveness by a variety of means but particularly by increasing the general level of education of the workforce;
- (b) demands by decision-makers for better information about outcomes and performance to improve policy-making about education - the 'what works' syndrome;

- (c) demands for information to guide and monitor the implementation of reforms, particularly structural reforms involving the devolution of authority, and to evaluate the outcome of those reforms;
- (d) political commitment to equity such as equality of outcomes for minority groups;
- (e) a belief that better information about effective strategies and performance will bring about qualitative improvements in teaching and learning;
- (f) enhancing accountability measures in the public sector by gathering data on performance and outcomes; and
- (g) a commitment to improving the information available to the public about the performance of public authorities (p. 15-16).

Commenting upon the potential use of performance indicators, Wilcox (1990) stated that performance indicators are seen as an essential element in the greater accountability which will be demanded of schools. As a consequence of financial delegation, there is a concerted attempt to develop appropriate [performance indicators] but also to model and interpret them.

Wyatt (1994) agreed that the concept of educational indicators as summary statistics on the status of education systems is not new. Whenever there are perceptions of falling levels of achievements, the traditional response has been a call for the imposition of higher 'standards'.

Many different 'concepts' of educational performance indicators have been defined by the various researchers. Ashenden (1987) and Sing (1990), for example, cite a range of indicators of effectiveness, equity, productivity, process, quality in education among others. The sources of data for performance indicators are eclectic: the data provided by the institutions which are part of administrative information systems; the data based on client and provider perceptions collected by questionnaire; or information collected through direct observation of the workings of the institutions (Wilcox, 1990).

Oakes (1986) defined performance indicators as possible information that is useful for understanding levels and variations in performance, in order to assess the impact of interventions and ultimately inform decision-making. Scheerens (1992) identifies three recent trends or indicators of performance as:

1. transition from descriptive statistics (largely input and resource measures) to measurement of performance outcomes;
2. movement towards more comprehensive systems and a growing interest in manipulable characteristics;
3. concern to measure data at more than one aggregation level.

He also shows how different indicators are appropriate according to the type, level and mode of decision making. He explains the different indicators as follows:

1. Types of Decision Making - whether we are interested in: the organisation of instruction; the planning of education and establishing the structures within which it is delivered; personnel management; or resource allocation and use.
2. Levels of Decision Making - whether at the level of the school; lower intermediate authority (e.g. districts); upper intermediate authority (e.g. provinces or regions); central authority.
3. Modes of Decision Making - varying from full autonomy to collaborative; to independent but within a framework (although the extent to which the latter is different depends on how tight the frame is).

Wyatt (1994) stressed that the recent pressure towards educational indicators (determinants of academic performance) is due to a call for the requirement of central government for a means of monitoring the process of devolution of responsibility to the school. The latter led to a call for how schools might evaluate themselves emphasizing the use of locally determined indicators in the school management process; and the use of indicators to monitor specific policy objectives in schools.

Oakes (1986) argued that performance indicators must provide at least one of the following kinds of information:

1. a description of performance in achieving desired educational conditions and outcomes;
2. features known through research to be linked with desired outcomes;

3. a description of central features of the system in order to understand its functioning;
4. information which is problem oriented; and
5. Policy-relevant information.

Thus far, attempts have been made to trace the historical development of academic performance and the indicators needed in defining it. This therefore forms the theoretical basis of the study.

### **Students' School Attendance and Academic Performance**

Attendance has long been considered a key component of a successful school experience for all students, although there has been surprisingly little research conducted on this topic (Atkinson, 2005; Epstein & Shelton, 2002). Epstein and Shelton noted that reducing the rates of student truancy and excessive absenteeism continued to be a goal of many schools and school divisions. Corville-Smith (1995) asserted that the issue of student attendance has received relatively little attention from educational researchers despite a history of concern which adversely affects students' performance.

Klem and Connell (2004) studied the link between teacher support and student engagement and achievement. All of the factors they used to define levels of student engagement were dependent upon the students being present at school; students who were not present simply could not be engaged. Klem and Connell used factors previously used by Marks (2000) to determine levels of student engagement. Marks conceptualizes engagement "as a psychological process, specifically, the attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the

work of learning” (p. 154). She asserts that this definition of engagement implies both affective and behavioral participation in the learning experience.

Atkinson (2005) commented on the lack of national truancy data, even though some metropolitan areas report thousands of unexcused absences each day. She suggested that truancy is a much more profound problem than might at first be obvious. Atkinson (2005) agreed with Garry (1996) that there is a clear and powerful link between truancy and numerous risk factors and risk behaviours among young people. Garry referred to truancy as “the first step in a lifetime of problems” noting that truancy had become a major problem creating negative influences on the future of our youth and resulting in huge social costs.

Sanderson, Dugoni, Rasinski, and Taylor (1996) prepared a descriptive summary report of The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 in which they discussed the six risk factors that were identified in order to define at-risk students for the original study and were subsequently used as the standard for a follow up study conducted in 1994, as well as used as the standard for other studies. The six risk factors identified were: “lowest socioeconomic quartile, single-parent family, older sibling dropped out of school, changed school two or more times from first to eighth grade, lower than average grades (C or lower), and repeating an earlier grade from first to eighth grade” (Horn & Chen, 1998, p. 3). Noticeably absent from the report of Sanderson et al. (1996) was any discussion of student attendance as a risk factor. Horn and Chen offered an explanation for this lack of focus on student attendance as having “to do with the correlation between attendance behavior and achievement. Higher achieving students are

more likely to report higher levels of attendance. Thus, once achievement is controlled for, there is little variation for attendance” (p. 26). Railsback (2004) maintained that it is well known and widely accepted that having children attending school on a regular basis is a key component of their academic success.

The research on the topic of student attendance has increased in recent years, due at least in part to the NCLB legislation (Atkinson, 2005; Klem & Connel, 2004). Truby (2001) cited a study by the Minneapolis public school district which suggested that attendance has a dramatic effect on achievement scores. According to the study, students who attended class, 95% of the time were twice as likely to pass state language arts tests as against students with attendance rates of 85%.

Moore (2005) also found that high rates of attendance correlate strongly with high grades and that low rates of attendance correlate strongly with low grades. Several researchers have established a positive relationship between attendance rates and graduation rates (Beem, 2002; Burley & Harding, 1998; Epstein & Shelton, 2002; Garry, 1996). Epstein and Shelton cite cross-sectional and longitudinal studies that indicate students who are absent more often beginning as early as first grade are those students who eventually drop out of school. The findings of several studies suggest that the pattern of absenteeism increases throughout a student’s school experience and that truancy in elementary schools is a strong predictor of truancy in high school (Burley & Harding; Epstein & Shelton). Burley and Harding (1998), through a national adolescent health survey of more than 90,000 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in 134 schools, found that

frequent problems with school work is a common trait among truant youth. Beem (2002) reported results from a study conducted in a school district in Kentucky that showed graduation rates could be radically improved by addressing truancy effectively. This small school district achieved a 100% graduation rate three concurrent years, attributing the success to a truancy reduction program that started in elementary school.

Dougherty (1999) presented a particularly interesting point in discussing the effect of cultural values on attendance. He noted that punctuality and good attendance are generally regarded as common values in American society. However, not all cultures place such importance on punctuality and consistent attendance. Dougherty suggested that as the American culture becomes more diverse, the need to communicate the high regard of such values becomes increasingly important. Such acculturation by parents and educators helps young people cross cultural boundaries in order to adopt values that lead to success in a given culture.

Atkinson (2005) proposed that there is a critical link between effective educational strategies and student attendance rates. She also noted that NCLB requires the development and implementation of uniform information and reporting system in every state, as attendance rates is a key performance indicator required to be reported at the state level and on a school-by-school basis. The National Research Council (2003) acknowledged that although assessing proximal goals such as increasing attendance and reducing dropout rates can mark progress that “reassures us that we are moving in the right direction, ultimately we



need to achieve the more ambitious goal of promoting deep cognitive engagement that results in learning” (p. 32).

A research by Lazear (2001) showed that students learn best in the first part of a lesson, which implies that it is critical not to lose valuable time at the start of a lesson on activities that are not central to the lesson objectives. Other useful action-oriented active learning strategies include beginning a lesson by asking students to list five things from the previous lessons and then comparing the list with the other students and ending a lesson with an activity that sums up a key learning idea, like for example telling a partner the most important thing learnt from the lesson. According to Nowell (1998) asking students for input into their assessment tasks and criteria is another learning strategy. Other strategies include learning through debates, role plays and doing research projects as well as visual construction of concepts for example mind maps. These strategies basically remind teachers of the importance of refreshing the class with the previous lessons and to link them with today’s activities at the start of each lesson. Students’ active participation throughout the lessons is the trade mark of active action-oriented Learning. Those students, who enjoy such learning styles and strategies conducted by their teachers, would surely benefit the most by retaining as much knowledge as possibly can.

Danesty and Okediran (2002) examined relationships between inquiry-based teaching and standardized test scores. One aspect of this study focused on three measures of student participation in physical science classes. The three measures were attendance, likelihood of “giving up” (not completing all course

requirements), and taking the End of Course (EOC) standardized test. They indicated that a positive relationship does exist between higher attendance, less likely to give up, and more likely to take the EOC standardized test (Danesty & Okediran).

Klem and Connel (2004) found that attendance and test scores were strongly associated with a high level of engagement. They reported that even with factors other than attendance and test scores used for defining student engagement, higher levels of engagement were linked with improved performance. They further showed that student engagement was a robust predictor of student achievement in school regardless of socioeconomic status. Students engaged in school were more likely to have higher grades and test score and lower dropout rates, while students with low levels of engagement were more likely to suffer adverse consequences such as chronic absenteeism and dropping out of school. Klem and Connell therefore concluded that creating more personalized educational environments resulted in more student engagement, higher test scores, and better attendance. The National Research Council (2003) reported similar findings from several studies that support the importance of promoting engagement because it is a strong motivator for students to attend school regularly and to stay in school until graduation.

### **Factors Influencing Students' School Attendance**

Marks (2000) determined levels of student engagement. Marks “conceptualizes engagement as a psychological process, specifically, the attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the work of learning”

(p. 154). She asserts that this definition of engagement implies both affective and behavioural participation in the learning experience.

Students' absenteeism is a major concern for educators at all levels of educational institutions. Brauer (1994) mentioned that "absenteeism creates a 'dead' tiresome and unpleasant classroom environment that makes students who come to classes feel uncomfortable and the professor irritable" (p. 206).

White (1992) found out that absenteeism disturbs the dynamic teaching-learning environment and adversely affects the overall "well-being of classes". Acknowledging the severity of the absenteeism problem, educators are exploring creative techniques to increase class attendance, such as innovative teaching methods and better equipped classroom.

Klem and Connell (2004) opined that students' attendance to school has a link with teacher support, student engagement and achievement. All of the factors they used to define levels of student engagement were dependent upon the students being present at school. Students who were not present simply could not be engaged.

In an attempt to find out some of the factors influencing students' class attendance, Devadoss and Foltz (1996) suggested motivation as a strong positive effect on student attendance. The finding of Devadoss and Foltz shows that better and more motivated students attend classes more frequently. Additionally, students who support themselves financially through work and/or loans while pursuing their education appear to attend classes more regularly. These students appear to know the value of their money, realize the importance of going to

school and take their education more seriously as indicated by more frequent class attendance.

Teachers who have won teaching awards tend to attract a higher percentage of students to their classes. Specifically, classes taught by such instructors reflected approximately a nine per cent higher attendance rate than those taught by teachers with no teaching award (Devadoss & Foltz, 1996). Clearly, this is an important finding since it confirms that a good teacher can make a significant difference, not only by increasing class attendance but also by stimulating students to understand the subject matter.

Research has also revealed that although theoretical expectation of the sign of the class days variable is ambiguous, empirical results show that student prefer classes held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (MWF), classes taught on these days of the week had better attendance than those held on Tuesday and Thursdays (T. Th). Specifically, MWF classes experienced a 6.4% higher attendance rate on average than T. Th classes. Students may prefer a shorter class (50 minutes) three times per week over a longer lecture (75 minutes). It is also noticed that the class time had an impact on attendance. Classes held during “prime” class hours (i.e. Between 10.00 am and 3.00 pm) experienced more frequent attendance (White, 1992 & Romer, 1993).

Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) stressed the fact that in big towns and cities in Ghana, children find it easy to absent themselves from school because some children leave home on the pretext of going to school but they will never reach school. He adds that others do go to school only to vanish after a few hours’ stay.

This is an indication that most students in cities or towns in Ghana deceive their parents for not going to school. This presupposes that a number of factors in towns or cities where commercial activities as well as other modern facilities are rampant prevent students from attending school for which their parents do not know.

Owusu (1987) revealed that in Kumasi (Ghana) 44% of the juveniles who escape schools and go to early employment actually need money to buy textbooks, school uniforms or to pay for their school fees .He indicated that 27% engage in trading in order to supplement the household budget.

The school itself has also found to have influence on students' class attendance. Anderman and Midgley (1998) recounted numerous factors such as lack of students' connection to teachers or other staff members, bullying and harassment from senior students to the junior students, social isolation of the school such not being involved in the inter school activities and other co curricular activities, among others, are some of the factors that can reinforce a student's dislike and distrust of school which eventually affect their attendance to school.

The home where a child is often seen most also influences class attendance. Everybody sees the home as a protective determinant for the child's development. Rumberger (1995) opined that parental monitoring and participation in their wards' education influence students attendance in school. He stated that families who are more involved with their wards schooling tend to be consistent with the expectations of the school and make sure their wards benefit from them.

On the other hand, students are likely to become confused about how they should behave if the schools and families have different rules and expectations. Such confusion kills most students' interest from attending school.

In the words of Johnson (1996), poverty has elastic effects on students' school attendance. A situation where parents lack enough resources and funds to sponsor their children's education renders education and learning impossible for children. Thus, many students abandon school to engage in child labour to make ends meet and by this, they spend much time on this act than schooling. This situation terribly affects students' class attendance.

Reid and Kendall (1982) found that schools that were characterized as small in class size, had lower institutional control, had less rigorous rule enforcement, had closer parent-school relationships, had student involvement in the management of schools and had lower rates of absences than schools that were custodial-oriented, had high levels of control and had inflexible organizational systems. Reid and Kendall also found low attendance rates in schools that had low academic performance.

### **Relationship between Academic Performance and School Attendance**

Internationally, there is considerable evidence to suggest that class attendance levels are moderately related to academic performance (Devadoss & Foltz, 1996, Park & Kerr, 1990; Romer, 1993). Some researchers argue that attendance is merely a proxy for student motivation (Durden & Ellis, 1965). This means that class attendance does not determine students' performance but seen as something students get inner satisfaction from as being part of a school. Romer

(1993) found a statistically significant relationship between performance and attendance after controlling for motivation. Studies on attendance rates and academic performance at South African higher education institutions are few. While, Garry (1996) found that lecture attendance was not significantly related to academic performance in a first-year economics course, others have found that there is a significant relationship between attendance and academic performance and that suggested that a more student approach to the lecture environment is most needed to improve upon the performance of students in school.

Executive summary (1998) on the analysis of the relationship between student and teacher attendance rates and student achievement suggested that poor teacher attendance combined with poor student attendance yielded the lowest scores followed by poor student attendance alone and poor teacher attendance alone.

McInnis and Hartley (2002), in their surveys of first-year students in seven Australian schools, found that between 1994 and 1999, the percentage of full-time students in paid employment had grown from forty-two percent to fifty-one percent. By 2001, this share had risen to seventy-three percent (McInnis & Hartley, 2002). The issue of the effect of paid work is not restricted to Australia. It has received attention in the literature (Winn, 2002). British literature has focused on the equity implications of paid employment, arguing that those students from low income backgrounds are likely to be disadvantaged educationally by their need to engage in paid employment (Metcalf, 2003).

An article by Lynn (2004) reported a negative effect of paid employment on academic attainment. They surveyed full-time undergraduates at Northumbria schools over a three year period, 1999 to 2001. On the basis of a total of 2,737 responses, they were able to provide their sample into seven subject groups and compared results for those in paid employment and those who were not. They found that paid employment had a significant negative effect on academic performance of between 4.9 and 0.7 percentage points.

In the economic models of time allocation developed by Becker (1974) students can be thought of as making rational optimizing decisions about the allocation of their time subject to the constraints they are facing. Achieving a particular grade in a subject can be thought of as a production decision. Students bring to their studies a certain level of motivation and natural ability. This can be used in combination with time spent in classes and individual study to produce certain grades outcomes.

A comparison of academic performance to class attendance revealed a positive trend of higher grades associated with higher attendance (Johnson, 1996). This presupposes that students' attendance relate directly to their academic achievements.

One of the largest costs involved in undertaking higher education is the opportunity cost of foregone earnings. By engaging in employment while studying, students can reduce those costs substantially but they will only be willing to engage in period employment up to the point where benefits of a higher income are equal to the cost of acquiring that income.



Available and accessible research evidence suggests that class attendance lead to academic success. Chung (2004) reported a significant correlation between achievement and attendance, homework, and mini-quizzes. Thus, students' achievement is a dependant of class attendance as mini-quizzes depend on home work. In a study by Green (1993), a significant correlation was reported between attendance grades for first year psychology students. Van Blerkon (1992) also studied why student missed class. Rodgers (2001) finds that attendance has a small but statistically significant effect on performance. This is an indication that the correlation coefficient between attendance and performance is small but statistically significant. From that research, it was reported that the most frequent reasons given by the students were: pressure from other courses, becoming discouraged, and believing attendance have little effect on a grade. In a follow-up study (Van-Blerkon, 1992) found fairly low correlation between academic perseverance, self-efficiency, class attendance and course grades.

Teevan and Dryburgh (2000) also studied the relationship between class attendance, class work, homework, and grade based on Collaborative tasks. Their results revealed that overall attendance predicted success on the task tests. In an attempt to control attendance (Berenson, Carter, & Norwoods, 1992) put in place a 'compulsory attendance policy' that combined reward and punishment protocols in which college students in America were allowed three unexcused absences, with additional unexcused absences possibly resulting in dismissal from the course. Eventually, students with no more than one absence between exam dates were awarded five points for that exam score. Consequently, there

was improvement in attendance rates, and the study showed that increased attendance rates correlates with increased achievement. With these results in mind, Berenson, Carter, and Norwood (1992) concluded that ‘it is highly likely that policies which enforce attendance will have an impact on students’ grades. In the same vein, Brooks (2001) compared reward-based and punishment approaches to controlling attendance. Students were either awarded extra grade points for regular attendance or penalized grade points for missing class. Attendance was recorded on ten class days, chosen at random. He found no significant difference between attendance rates and concluded that there is no significant difference between class attendance and performance. Halpern (2000), on the other hand, documents an improvement in attendance rates by employing a grade incentive with 997 students over four years compared to a baseline group attendance policy (i.e. no rewards), the reward group demonstrated 25.5% decrease in absenteeism.

Unfortunately Halpern’s (2000) study did not analyze whether increased attendance correlated with increased academic performance. Hancock (1996) reported dramatic correlation between test performance and penalizing students for missing class. He found that 10% of the final grades were based upon attendance. Additionally, Caviglia-Harris (2004) investigated the impact of a mandatory attendance policy on student grades. He reported that GPA prior to taking the course and SAT score consistent predictors of students’ performance, even after accounting for student withdrawer; and that attendance rates are not found to be significant indicators of exam grades after accounting for

simultaneity. Marburger (2001) found that absenteeism increased the probability of answering the exam question incorrectly. To Marburger, absenteeism effects ranged from 7.5 percent to 14.6 percent. One of the focuses of the present study therefore is to find out if class attendance and gender could have significant effects on the academic achievement in social studies. This is perhaps, necessary to determine whether or not attendance is important in a verbal-based subject as social studies, and also because a majority of other studies in this area have focused on young learners, whether these findings could still hold for adult learners as been examined here.

Similarly, most of the studies reviewed have been carried out elsewhere, it may be interesting to see, if location of the study and particularly, a country with high incidence of HIV/AIDS as Botswana will yield further results on impact of attendance on achievement. It is also possible to be able to come out with suggestions on new strategies for tackling the problem of absenteeism. In general research has indicated that greater absenteeism is associated with lower achievement (Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley & Vincent, 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004). The relationship between student achievement and attendance has been argued to be a recursive one in which those students who are lower performing are more likely to reduce their attendance rate which in turn impacts their subsequent achievement and so on until finally they drop out (Knesting & Waldron, 2006).

### **Drop Outs and Non Attendance**

Two main factors in the success of any educational system are the rates at which young people drop out of or complete high school each year (USDOE,

2003). Student effort and devotion to their studies and the choices they make as a progression through their schooling years contribute to their academic success or lack thereof.

Students' attendance, interest, and attention to their studies affect how well they perform at each level and could be a determinant factor in their school completion. Levels of student effort can be illustrated by how often students are absent from school, how interested they are in their schoolwork, whether they try to do their best, whether they complete their assignments, and how much time they spend on homework and other activities such as work or watching television (Wirt, 2002).

A sense of belonging to school can be directly related to dropping out of school. Additionally, it has been reported that students, who are identified as at-risk, whose teachers emphasize a sense of belonging in their classrooms and schools tended to accept those values and remain in school (Ma, 2003). Reference to a report issued in "Psychology in the Schools", in 2002 various factors can influence a student's decision to not complete school. Items that were viewed as particularly important issues with an influence on whether children drop out of school were parental support/supervision at home, school attendance, role models, gang involvement, and self-esteem. In the same report, prevention activities which were successful for dropouts were reported as increasing motivation, notifying parents of a late or absent students, providing emotional support, and a lower student/teacher ratio. For the 2000–01 academic years, the US Department of Education (USDOE) released a report indicating that the 9th- through 12th-

grade non attendant rate across the nation ranged from 2.2 percent in North Dakota to 10.9 percent in Arizona. Twenty-six of the forty-five reporting states in the study had non-attendant rates ranging from four to seven percent.

Across all reporting states the median dropout rate was approximately four percent (USDOE, 2003). Also, across ethnicities, "dropout rates were generally lowest for White, non-Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander students and highest for American Indian/Alaska Native; Black, non- Hispanic; and Hispanic students in reporting states" (USDOE, 2003, p. 6).

The Hispanic population has the highest dropout rate, followed closely by other ethnically diverse student populations. Students who earn low grades, who do not participate in school activities, who have poor attendance, and who receive little support and encouragement to stay in school are at a greater risk of dropping out. Additionally, being bored with school also was a major reason for the decision to leave school before graduation (Brooks, 2001).

Frequent truancy is also an indicator of potential schooling problems. Truants show little connection with school, exhibit low academic motivation, and consequently show poor school performance (Hallfors, Vevea & Iritani, 2002). Again, it has been suggested that the problems of dropout, absenteeism and truancy, disruptive classroom behaviour, and delinquency can all be seen as outcomes of an early pattern of withdrawal from school (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Research indicates that some schools have disproportionately high levels of truancy and other forms of absenteeism. In some cases, these problems have persisted despite the programmes implemented by local school administrations

(Reid, 2003). Reid suggested that in order to combat truancy and absenteeism within some schools, it may be necessary to change pupils, parents and teachers' attitudes towards these schools and the process of schooling. Higher truancy rates are also associated with lower self-concepts, single parent homes, and lower grade expectations, which both parents and school officials agreed upon. Problematic absenteeism refers to children who are absent for more than 50% of the time in a 2-week period (Kearney, 2007). Secondly, Kearney suggests that the use of common terminology between researchers and other professionals can further build consensus. In his view when consensus is attained, readers will be less likely to misinterpret studies and their findings. In Ghana more than 20% of all children of school-going age (6-15 year-olds) have either dropped-out or never enrolled in school (MOESS, 2007).

In the Davidson and Kanyuka (1992) study, over 90 percent of teachers noted that boys performed better in class and had few repetition and dropout rates compared to girls. The explanations for these differences were given as early pregnancies, girls' desire for early marriage, or that girls were just plain lazy. But the society does recognize that it is exactly these negative attitudes which reinforce the trend in the educational differentials between girls and boys. There is great need for a positive atmosphere for girls both at home and in the school setting.

## **Absenteeism in Schools and Academic Performance**

Absenteeism is a multifaceted and multi-causal problem. Identifying causal factors of absenteeism is vital in developing preventive methods and interventions (Lehr, Sinclair & Christenson, 2004).

Current research suggests that even though the main causes of absenteeism vary from study to study, a combination of home, school, and individual factors may be involved (Reid, 2005). Research also states that the causes of absenteeism on attendance can vary depending on the methodology used (Reid, 2005). Three main causal factors of truancy have been identified. These factors include individual factors, institutional factors, and family backgrounds and community factors (Lindstadt, 2005; McCluskey, Bynum & Patchin, 2004).

Individual or personal characteristics can have an impact on whether or not an individual attends school. Petrides, Chamorro-Premuzic, Frederickson and Furnham (2005) collected data from 901 11th graders from a number of secondary schools under the Buckinghamshire County Council Educational Authority (UK) to determine the psychosocial influences on scholastic behaviour and achievement in school. The authors categorized students according to personality traits: psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism. The results of the study showed that children who have high verbal ability, low psychoticism (i.e., they are altruistic, conformist, empathic, and socialized), and low extraversion (i.e., they are quiet and restrained) tend to have better attendance in schools than others.

Also, those children who were excluded from school due to serious breaches or discipline were more likely to have below average verbal ability scores and above average psychoticism scores (aggression, hostility). Interestingly, there was no relationship between verbal ability or the three personality traits and the number of unauthorized absences for truants (Petrides et al., 2005). Furthermore, neuroticism (high or low) did not have a significant impact on academic performance and was not a strong predictor of attendance (Petrides et al.). These findings were similar to two other studies in which children's aggressive behaviour was used to predict educational outcomes (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990; Risi & Kistner, 2003). They found out that children who were perceived as aggressive in elementary school were less likely to graduate from high school. The authors explained that since aggression is a relatively stable behaviour, those who display aggressive behaviours in elementary school will continue to display these behaviours later on and are more likely to be expelled from school than others. Kupersmidt and Coie (1990) also found out that aggressive and rejected children are at substantial risk for subsequent problems of maladjustment such as truancy and school withdrawal.

Again, Cairns, Cairns, and Neckerman (1989) studied participants ( $N=475$ ) from three different middle schools located in three different communities. The participants were followed for 5 years (starting in the seventh grade). The purpose of the study was to examine any behavioural, cognitive, and demographic factors that might be associated with early school dropout. School dropout was determined by tracking individuals to the schools they attended



during the period of the study and if they dropped out, they were tracked to their place of employment or residence. At the beginning of the study, the authors collected various participant characteristics data. These included school nominations for aggressive behaviour, teacher rating on peer aggression, peer popularity, academic competence, social relations and social networks, socioeconomic status, maturational status, and chronological age. Cairns et al. stated that the group of students who are most likely to drop out later could reliably be identified at the beginning of the study. They stated that children with high levels of aggressive behaviour and low levels of academic performance were the ones who were most likely to drop out of school. Out of the group of boys that were in this category, 80% dropped out of school before completing grade eleven. Of the girls who were nominated as having aggressive behaviours and low levels of academic performance in the seventh grade, 47% dropped out of school. Attitudes about school have also been identified in the literature as a causal factor of non-attendance.

In a review, Reid (2005) discovered that truants and non -attendees tend to prefer fewer and different subjects (compared to other students who like a variety of Children's subjects), under-achieve or perform badly in a range of school subjects, disagree or have negative attitudes towards school rules and regulations, fail to do their homework, have fewer friends in school, have lower long term career aspirations, and tend to suffer from psychosomatic illnesses. From a Truancy Evaluation Center survey, Berger and Wind (2000) found that the majority of the students skipped school because they missed their school bus.

Also, some of the children who were picked up for skipping school were actually not in school because they were suspended from school. About 30% of the truants picked up by the police stated that they skipped school because they disliked it. Jenkins (1995) report a similar finding among middle school students in which the author examined the relationship between school commitment and delinquency. Low levels of school commitment were associated with school delinquency and were an important predictor of school crime, school misconduct, and school nonattendance (Jenkins, 1995). The findings suggest that students who are involved in delinquency may not necessarily be committed to delinquent goals but lack commitment to educational goals. Another important finding of the study is that school delinquency such as nonattendance is explained more by students' commitment to school than by personal background characteristics, family involvement in schooling, or ability grouping. Henry and Huizinga (2007) presented the prevalence of self-reported recent truancy among the 8th and 10th grade students who participated in the Monitoring the Future national survey in 2003.

The author explored associations between recent truant behaviour, demographic characteristics, other school related risk factors, and drug use among adolescents. The study revealed that for both 8th and 10th graders, there was a lower probability of truancy if they participated in religious activities, had no or only a limited time unsupervised after school, had strong academic achievement, did not have a job, felt safe at school, had parents who graduated from college, and reported that they did not use drugs recently. The most significant effects

were observed between those students who were disengaged from school and were using drugs. The data on Institutional Factors to the problem have been considered by many authors as linking to structural realities and other school-related factors when determining the causes of truancy ( Lindstadt, 2005; Reid, 2003).

Barth (1984) and McCluskey et al. (2004) identified unsafe school environment, lack of effective and consistent school policies related to attendance, and teachers with low expectations revealed that they had a higher probability of recent truancy than any other for student achievement as some of the factors that cause truancy. Reid and Kendall (1982) found that schools that were characterized as small in class size, had lower institutional control, had less rigorous rule enforcement, had closer parent-school relationships, and had student involvement in the management of schools had lower rates of absences than schools that were custodial-oriented, had high levels of control, and had inflexible organizational systems. Reid and Kendall also found low attendance rates in schools that had well-planned curricula and realistic expectations of their children. Additionally, they found that irrelevant or unstimulating subject matter, lack of challenging school work, and poor relationships between teachers and students were factors associated with high rate of absenteeism. Another institutional factor that may be related to high absenteeism and truancy is large school systems in low income, inner-city school districts (Teasley, 2004). Rather than addressing these issues, disciplinary policies that focus on excluding, suspending, and transferring students who are identified as troublemakers are ignoring the underlying issues

that may be causing behavioural or attendance problems (Bowditch, 1993). Bowditch explained that students from low income, inner city school districts may have circumstances in their lives that prevent them from attending school, and school polices need to address those issues rather than focus on punishment by excluding them from school.

Durden and Ellis (1995) asserted that classroom participation is better, and students feel that the environment is more warm and supportive when school enrolment is smaller. They further said that students' past cumulative attendance helps them to understand better on the subject and enhance their grades. This is virtually true for most subjects including Economics. For example, students might feel confused about different shapes of indifference curves when they first learned this concept. After attending several classes, the repetitive use and the application of this concept should enable them to become familiar with this subject. Later, students would feel more comfortable analyzing the maximization problem given their good understanding of indifference curves. Therefore, we would expect that students who miss fewer classes in the past might do better on their exams. As a result, it is important to incorporate this cumulative attendance effect when estimating the impact of attendance on exam performance.

### **Factors Influencing Academic Performance of Students**

Various views have been expressed on the factors affecting academic performance of students in school. Lockheed (1991) alluded to regular attendance to school by both teachers and students and according to time table help teachers to gain hold the attention of students which leads to improved learning.

It is also pointed out that academically, successful schools set high expectations for work and achievement. The concept of the school as a place of learning is communicated clearly to students, and commitment learning is expected in every classroom. Expectations are manifested in the performance standards set by the school. Low standards reflect low expectations; high standards reflect high expectations (Anderson, 1988).

Adoom (2007) suggested that the issue of large class sizes prevent teachers from giving their best to improving students' performance particularly when it has to do with marking assignments and teaching. He further said that a well motivated teacher will definitely be a performer to help improve students in school. Frustration as a result of a mistake made by some students in some subjects deters them from further learning of those subjects. This means that students mostly lose interest in subjects they often make mistakes and stop to improve upon them. Volkman and Bye (2006) stated that a good school environment helps students to improve upon their performances. They further stressed that a school which has a spacious environment, needed teaching and learning materials with teachers of good attitude tend to have students with high academic performance.

Dekalb (1999) suggested that the learning environment was also important to the improvement in the performance of students. Learners have physiological, psychological and social needs and interest that direct and focus their attention in classroom. It is mentioned that young people in our media oriented society have grown up with highly stimulated things such as television and special effects

movies so that they have become accustomed to high levels of stimulation on a daily basis and too often expects similar experiences when they enter the classroom to improve upon their learning and performance (Moore, 2005). This suggests that classroom life, which seldom offers such stimulation, is perceived as dull and lifeless by many students, a perception that often limits their motivation to learn and perform well. It is also mentioned that the type of need requires influences one's academic performance. Kenneth (1998) stressed that students in every class have a wide variety of needs so those with higher needs to achieve tend to perform well with higher grades in class.

It is also said that students' perceptions of themselves and their place in school influence their academic performance. Hancock (1996) opined that students who feel connected to their school are more motivated to achieve and have higher academic performance.

Home background is known to have great influence on students' academic performance and educational success. Poor parental care with gross deprivation of social and economic needs of a child usually yield poor academic performance of the child while good parenting could enhance strong academic performance (Shittu, 2004). Danesty and Okediran (2002) lamented that street hawking among school students has psychologically imposed other problems like sex networking behaviour, juvenile delinquent behaviour which takes much of the student school time that necessitated the poor academic performance and drop out syndrome.

Yinusa and Basil (2008) mentioned that markets and garages located near schools have always posed a threat to students as they endanger students' life and concentrations for effective learning and high academic performance.

Inconsistent government policies in the past caused a fallen standard in academic performance of school students. Yinusa and Basil stipulated that politicization of education by some political parties do not improve students' academic performance.

Poor attendance to school has been noted as one of the causes of students' academic failure. It is of common knowledge that students' mobility has a link to academic performance in school. This presupposes that frequent changes of school for one reason or another harm both the students and the classroom he or she enters, and these affect them academically. Each time students move, he or she must adjust to new peers and social expectations. Rumberger (1995) stated that student mobility is the practice of students making non-promotional school changes, often during the school year. He further stressed that no matter how effective teachers are, if students are not attending school they have no chance to learn.

Agyemang (1993) reported that a teacher who does not have both the academic and the professional teacher qualification would undoubtedly have a negative influence on the teaching and learning of his/her subject. However, he further stated that a teacher who is academically and professionally qualified, but works under unfavorable conditions of service would be less dedicated to his

work and thus be less productive than a teacher who is unqualified but works under favorable conditions of service.

Danesty and Okediran (2002) lamented that a combination of a healthy family background living in good environment and a conducive school's environment with fortified learning or instructional aides and motivational incentives improve students' performance while the lack of them retard academic performance.

Neagley and Evans (1970) were of the view that effective supervision of instruction can improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Etsey, Amedahe and Edjah (2005) in a study of 60 schools from peri-urban (29 schools) and rural (31 schools) areas in Ghana found that academic performance was better in private schools than public schools because of more effective supervision of work. Teachers in schools are the ideal people as well as in the best situation to promote active learning amongst students in schools. Active learning is about energizing and sustaining attention of students, who then become very interested in doing any classroom activities. A number of researches have been done on active learning. Among these is a research by Ford and Sutphen (1996) which showed that acting on information leads to better recall because it requires the individual to understand the information first. Although class attendance is a positive indicator of a students' grade, other factors come in to influence students' performance in school. Factors such as poverty, consistent low grades in school, class size and the condition of a school affect academic performance. Moore (2005) and Agyemang (1993) reported that a teacher who does not have both the



academic and the professional teacher qualification would undoubtedly have a negative influence on the teaching and learning of his/her subject. Again, a teacher who is academically and professionally qualified, but works under unfavorable conditions of service would be less dedicated to his work and thus be less productive than a teacher who is unqualified but works under favorable conditions of service. Students' involvement in academic work and co curricular activities are said to maximize their academic performance in school. In the work of Astin (1993), the more involved that students are in the academic social aspects of the school life, the more they benefit in terms of learning and personal development. A study carried by Tinto (1993) revealed that students' involvement in school positively affects their academic achievement retention in particular, and the educational gains as a whole. This suggested that every student is beneficial to national development and if he losses in school, his country losses as well. Despite a widely held assumption that a combination of students' involvement in co curricular activities and academic work positively affect their academic performance, other researchers see it differently.

McCluskey et al. (2004) opined that little attention must be given to co curricular activities because they may divert or distract students from serious studying. On the part of Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), co curricular involvement is often considered unnecessary or secondary to academic involvement in spite of the call for integration of academic and co curricular life of a school. This presupposed that too much of co curricular activities in a school negatively affect students' academic achievement so, there should be moderation

in them to help students concentrate more on academic work when they come to school. Kraft (1994) found in his study of the ideal class size and its effects on effective teaching and learning in Ghana that class sizes above 40 have negative effects on students' achievement. He was of the opinion that numerical strength of a class to large extent, affected the performance of the students in that class.

### **Academic Achievements of Students with High Class Attendance**

Majority of the people count attendance positively in grade determination whilst others take the lack of attendance against the students' grade. A study conducted by Horn and Chen (1998) on cumulative class attendance and examination performance revealed that students cumulative attendance produced a positive and significant impact on students examination performance. In the study, attending lectures corresponds to a 4% improvement in examination performance, and the marginal impact of cumulative attendance on examination performance is also close to 4%.

It is believed that time is the most important determinant of student success and each unit of time in the class itself provided, among all the class related activities, the greatest improvement in student's performance. This pre-supposes that regular students' attendance in school improves students' academic performance. Thus, time in any course is the time actually spent in the classroom and it has the greatest impact on overall students' performance because the time spent in class each day for a particular course does the most to improve the student's grade (Yinusa & Basil, 2008).

Park and Keer (1990) suggested that regular class attendance can aid significantly by acting as an insurance policy in avoiding a D or an F grade in a given class. In a way, regular attendance to school improves a student's academic performance.

A research article on "the impact of class attendance on students' performance in a course" by Romer (1993) concluded that while holding constant all other explanatory variables the grade, the mean GPA for the students with strong attendance was, on average, one entire letter grade higher than that of students with poorer attendance.

A case can be made that requiring attendance can be a successful means of improving the value added of any course (Shanker, 1990). Attendance is also considered to be a major component of academic success. Moore (2005) demonstrated that there is a strong correlation of high class attendance with high grades as well. Beaulieu (1985) studied the attendance behaviour of 118 business students at Northern State University (NSU) and monitored in 4 classes. After 10 weeks of classes' absenteeism, feedback was given to these students. Examination of the data indicated a strong correlation between attendance and subsequent course grade. Their study went this way:

The attendance of 162 of business students in upper division business courses was monitored each class period. Ninety six students were female, while sixty-six were male. One author utilized a sign-in sheet which was passed out each class period. The other author enlisted one student in each class to keep a

record of attendance in each class. Attendance sheets were given to work studies who entered the data on a spreadsheet.

At the beginning of the eighth week of the semester students were given an individual letter which indicated the number of days that they were absent and the percentage of days that they were absent. Also, they were informed how many days their classmates on average were absent as well as the percentage absences on average for their class. Students were informed that this information was for informational purposes and that there were no consequences regarding their absences. Attendance continued to be monitored for the remainder of the semester and was seen to have significant influence on class attendance. Thus; students with regular attendance tend to progress academically.

#### **Academic Achievement of Students with Low Class Attendance**

It is often argued that student scholastic success is a function of student engagement. There are a great many factors that are identified as contributing to student engagement (including standards, teacher support, relevant and interesting curriculum, and personalized learning environments (Rogers, 2001) and there are a great many ways of measuring engagement.

Whilst numerous studies measure engagement via self-report techniques such as surveys (e.g. Barth,1984) these are open to response biases and less suitable for use by primary school students who may be less able or inclined to openly express their engagement than more mature samples. Direct measures of student engagement can range from expert ratings of student task engagement, successful task completion, to observation of particular classroom behaviours

(Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003). A more extreme indicator of student engagement commonly used in the literature is student attendance (Klem & Connell, 2004).

In general, research has indicated that greater absenteeism is associated with lower achievement (Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley & Vincent, 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004). The relationship between student achievement and attendance has been argued to be a recursive one in which those students who are lower performing are more likely to reduce their attendance rate which in turn impacts their subsequent achievement and so on until finally they drop out (Jones, 1984; Knesting & Waldron, 2006).

Park and Keer (1990) opined that lack of students' attendance was statistically significant in explaining why a student received a D rather than an A, a B or a C grade in a specific class. This same data were also used by them to determine the relative impact of each absence in the student's final letter grade for a particular course. The empirical result showed that absence from class was statistically significant in lowering the letter grade of the typical student. Specifically, each absence from class lowered a student's grade by 0.06 in a 4.00 grading system. Thus, a student with 10 absences in a given term would lower his/her grade by 0.6, which would be the difference between a C plus and a B for example.

Judith Levine's article "The Effect of Different Attendance Policies on Student Attendance and Achievement" presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association in 1992 (in ERIC Microfiche ED 348 762)

discusses how students respond to a variety of attendance policies. In general, she distinguishes three types of attendance policy: Required Explicit where attendance is required and absence does adversely affect the student's final grade; Not Required Implicit where there is no requirement for attendance, attendance does not affect the grade and there is no announcement of the attendance policy to the students; and Not Required Explicit where there is an announcement that attendance is not required or counted in the final grade but attendance was otherwise encouraged by the professor. Her conclusion reaffirmed what one would suspect would be the common sense view of the impact of course policies on attendance. The more students were required and/or encouraged to attend, the better was class attendance and, if a student missed frequently, that student was less likely to do well in that particular course.

There is also a research which suggests that the student evaluation of faculty is clearly affected by the pattern of student attendance. An article by Dale and Norma in 1994 "Assessing Faculty Performance Using the Student Evaluation of Instruction" concluded that:

1. Research indicates that attendance is statistically significant in explaining class grade and overall performance of students.
2. Students who miss class frequently significantly increase their odds of a poor grade in a given course.
3. A case can be made that requiring attendance can be a successful means of improving the value added of any course.

October of 2007, the National Center for School Engagement released a comprehensive report on absenteeism in the early grades and the relationship between absenteeism, poverty and student academic success. The report is titled A National Portrait of Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades. The report included these findings.

1. Almost 14% of kindergartners, 12% of first graders, 11% of third graders and 10% of fifth graders missed an average of 12 to 18 days a year.
2. Over 11% of kindergartners, almost 9% of first graders, 6% of third graders and 5% of fifth graders are chronically absent from school missing at least 18 days or at least 10% of the school year.
3. The greater the number of absences in kindergarten, the greater the number of absences in first grade. Over one-half of chronic absentees in kindergarten also were chronic absentees in first grade.
4. Children who exhibited immature behaviors had higher absenteeism rates than children exhibiting mature behaviors.
5. Children with high absenteeism rates are more likely to complain about school or claim to be sick in order to stay home. That is fodder for another column.

Poor attendance produces more dropouts than all of the other reasons combined. That includes variables such as going to a community college, moving to an unknown location, academic problems, choosing work over school, school discipline, unstable home environments, pregnancy, being incarcerated, health problems, being a runaway, caring for children and substance abuse. We have the

greatest chance of improving the current level of student academic performance and reducing the current dropout rate by requiring poor attending students to attend school. When you know about poor attendance, do not support it, do not ignore it and do not condone it through your silence. Chung (2004) explained that students who miss too many classes end up doing poorly, withdrawing, or requiring significant help in the form of one-on one meeting or tutoring in order to catch up.

### **Sex Differences on Class Attendance and Academic Performance**

Literature on academic achievement is extensive and some findings have shown that females usually score higher on average than males on test of verbal abilities, and that males score higher on average than females on tests of mathematics ability (Halpern, 2000), abilities (Hedge & Nowell, 1995); and on tests of stereotypically male vocational information and aptitude (Hedge and Nowell, 1995). These studies were carried out in America among twelve grade students. On the other hand, girls have been found by several studies to be more motivated and higher achievers than boys (Al-Emadi, 2003).

The literature on gender differences on academic achievement is extensive (Nowell, 1998). It has been assumed that both at the school level and at the college level, girls have registered higher achievement scores than boys have done (e.g. Al-Emadi, 2003). He further argues that several explanations have been given to this phenomenon and that in the Arab cultures, the socialization of boys and girls and the way of living partially explains the differential gender effects on achievement and achievement related variables. Girls are more restricted and



confined to home, especially during adolescence than boys are. To this author, this seems to give girls more time to work on school work than boys who have more freedom to be outside of homes. He concluded that, the focus of boys on schoolwork is much less than the focus of girls. Research has suggested that on an empirical level, girls perform on reading and writing subjects while boys perform better on the more analytical subject of math and science (U.S Dept. of Education, USDOE 2006). Many authors have expounded on this idea, (Hancock, 1996), yet the data on the male –female achievement gap are often inconsistent. In 1998 for example, in a research carried out in America, it was found that young men scored higher on both the verbal and quantitative sections of scholastic achievement test (SAT) than young women (Kirk, 2000).

In the same vein, some writers have noted that this may be because of a bias against female in our educational system. In support of the above finding, Kirk (2000) gave a further explanation that the tests results reflect a selection bias in which more at risk females opt to take the scholastic achievement test related to males. Rood (1989) in a study carried out in Victoria High School, Australia, among Year 7 and 8 co-education students found no gender differences in achievement based on the type of mathematics class, but did report increased levels of confidence in learning and using mathematics by girls in about their mathematics ability ‘which in turn significantly increased the likelihood of their subsequent participation in senior mainstream mathematics education.

Females earn higher grades than males, and some possible explanations have been proposed by researchers. The reasons proposed are both biological and

environmental. In carefully controlled studies of learning disabilities, males have been found to have more learning disabilities than females by a ratio of two to one (Henning-Stout & Close-Conoley, 1992). Males are classified as emotionally disturbed at four times the rate of females (Henning-Stout and Close-Conoley, 1992). Some researchers have estimated that males are 10 times more likely to exhibit stuttering, a language problem. There are four to five times more males who are dyslexic than females (Stein, 1994). Of course, one is taking a leap of faith to assume that learning disability testing is not biased by sex stereotypes as well. Males also display a greater amount of negative social behavior than females in the classroom and this is thought to play a role in their academic performance (Downey & Vogt- Yuan, 2005).

Socially, boys do not fare as well as girls, at least in part because they are encouraged to challenge social norms as an expression of masculinity (Fine 1987). This researcher asserts that boys are more willing to take risks and are less compliant than girls, who have also been taught, and rewarded, for compliant behavior. Many males associate good grades at school with being girl-like, and, therefore, they do not want to make good grades (Halpern, 2000).

One generalization about males as a whole is that their cognitive abilities appear to be much more variable than females. There are more males at the very high and low ends of the scale than there are females (Hedges & Nowell, 1995). Females usually score higher on written measures than they do on multiple-choice questions, and the reverse tends to be true for males (Hedges & Nowell, 1995). Many tests have also shown that females are superior at fine motor manipulations.

Kimura (1993) was of the view that females are better with motor skills that involve throwing a projectile or aiming at a target than males. Hedges and Kimura(1995) opined that one could make the argument that this is social conditioning. There are numerous reasons why girls now generally earn better grades in school (starting in elementary school and continuing into high school). These reasons include neurological differences that produce somewhat different cognitive capabilities and socially determined factors. The central focus here, relevant to the sociological perspective, is change in the performance of girls and boys in school settings over time.

In one of the earliest studies, Morris (1959) referring to the psychic and social differences between sexes, claimed that the education outcomes of men and women will, at least in part, be different at the collegiate and graduate level because the debate on gender differences in cognitive abilities has actually evolved out of the debate on biological versus social determinism. The biological perspective on sex differences and cognitive performance considers social factors to be trivial or subordinate to biological factors like brain structure. Lynn asserts that males have larger average brain sizes than females and therefore, would be expected to have higher average IQs<sup>1</sup>.

Mackintosh (1998), on the other hand, claimed that there is no sex difference in general intelligence. Mackintosh proposed that general intelligence should be defined as reasoning ability and that the best measure of this is the Progressive Matrices. Examining two tests administered by The Israeli Defense Forces which qualify as IQ tests -one of them is an adaptation of Progressive

Matrices- Lynn (2004) found no sex difference in investigating academic performance at pre-collegiate level, Loeber (1987) found female students to obtain higher GPA compared to males. In examining sex-related difference in classroom grades, Kimball (1989) found that in contrast to standardized measures of mathematics achievement tests female students outperform males in math classes. Wilberg and Lynn (1999) arrived at a similar conclusion for history classes versus history tests. The authors explain this pattern by stating that females tend to work more conscientiously and have a stronger work ethic than males. They also tend to have better language abilities including essay writing skills, vocabulary and word fluency which contribute to better course work.

Harbison and Hanushek (1992) noted that although gender differences in math achievement continue to exist on high cognitive level tasks at the high school level, such differences appear to be declining. Young and Fisler (2000) examining SAT-M scores of high school seniors, find males to score better than females. However, they note that males generally come from households where the parents' socioeconomic status as measured by examinee reported educational levels and income, is higher. In contrast, female test takers are more diverse and include more low-income students than the boys group. Others have argued that the content of the test or of its administration normally favours males more than females (Bridgeman & Wendler, 1991). Yet other researchers have explained the gap by adhering to such factors as differences in course taking behaviour, classroom experiences and cognitive processing (Young & Fisler, 2000).

Wilberg and Lynn (1999) focus on the gender gap in English secondary schools. Their analysis was based on the performance of boys and girls in some selected examinations in the UK and girls were found to get better grades than boys. This phenomenon was explained by boys' disregard for authority, academic work, formal achievement, differences in students' attitudes to work, their goals and aspirations as well as girls' increased maturity and more effective learning strategies. Baker and Jones (1993) analyzed sex differences in the eighth grade math performance of over 77,000 students in 19 developed and developing countries. They found no evidence of a significant gender gap. Both cross-national variation in sex differences in mathematical performance and the trend toward less of a difference between males and females question any innate male superiority in intelligence. OECD (2001) analyzed gender differences in mathematics and science achievement in the eighth grade for fourteen OECD countries including Turkey. The study found that gender differences in mathematics achievement were statistically insignificant in all countries except the Czech Republic. In science, gender differences favoured males and were often statistically significant except for five countries including Turkey.

In higher education women are often found to outperform men. Hyde and Kling (2001) stated this to be the case irrespective of the measure of success used. Halpern (2000) reported that sex remained a significant predictor of CGPA after controlling for various individual attributes such as ethnic background, examination scores and the high school attended. Women were also found to obtain better grades than would be predicted from their examination scores

(Leonard & Jiang, 1999; Hyde & Kling, 2001; Bridgeman & Wendler, 1991; Wainer & Steinberg, 1992). Many researchers claim that a large part of the under-prediction derives from the difference in course taking patterns of male and female college students. Ruling out differential course selection as an explanation for the under-prediction of female grades, Leonard and Jiang (1999) suggested that females have better study skills than the male students. Other researchers have argued that women receive higher grades than men because they work harder and attend class more frequently (Wainer & Steinberg, 1992).

Investigating success in terms of course grades, Bridgeman and Wendler (1991) found that women typically had equal or higher grades in math classes. Wainer and Steinberg (1992) using a sample of 62,000 students concluded that although women had lower examination scores, they received similar grades from first-year math courses. Cohn et al. (1998), on the other hand, found gender to an insignificant determinant of success in courses on macroeconomics. The literature survey on gender differences in scholastic performance at different levels indicate mixed results.

In Ghana, Weis (1991) has documented the striking inequalities in recruitment to post-primary education between girls and boys. Recent studies in other parts of Africa substantiate the precarious position of girls as far as access to schooling is concerned (Milton & Kuppenbach, 1997; Lee 1988; Leigh-Doyle, 1991). A number of factors constitute barriers to girls' full participation in school which result in their academic performance. Some of these barriers are "formal" in that they are linked to institutional policies, practices and procedures. The other is

"informal," being mainly socio-cultural in nature and arising from stereotyped attitudes and beliefs about women's roles and capabilities (Good, Sikes & Brophy, 1973).

In both the patrilineal and matrilineal societies, great emphasis is placed upon women to produce children. In the traditional context, there are initiation ceremonies which act as a medium for the transmission of knowledge and traditional etiquette. It is through the initiation ceremonies that cultural norms, practices and beliefs are learned both within the family and outside from peers (Davidson & Kanyuka, 1992). During these ceremonies girls are instructed about a woman's subservient role in society. They are advised to be respectful and humble at all times. As Helitzer-Allen (1994) noted, girls are often encouraged to get married as soon as they reach menses about age 14 and so they are not challenged to work hard in school. The view of society at large is that it is better to educate boys than girls because girls leave school as soon as they start menstruating, which is at the age of 12-14, to get married (Davidson & Kanyuka, 1992). Once girls begin menstruating they are considered grown-ups who can take care of themselves while boys take longer to mature and thus can legitimately continue to stay in school longer than girls. Thus, right from the start, girls face an uphill battle in access to education.

When considering the education for children, most of the time boys are favored over girls. In spite of this differential treatment, parents expect their daughters to get married to resourceful and influential people. The other reason boys perform better than girls in relation to school is that girls will be looked after

by their husbands when they get married and keeping girls in school once they begin menstruating may result in unwanted pregnancies which will reduce their chances of having a good and stable marriage in the future. Thus, culturally determined ways of defining women, and their roles results in gender restructuring which is more often in favour of men than women (Davidson & Kanyuka, 1992).

The economic factor also accounts for deciding whether a girl will be sent to school or not. High income parents can afford to send daughters to school because they can afford school expenses for both boys and girls in the family (Finn & Dulberg, 1983). They further said that low income families will usually send the male rather than the female child to school because of the cultural stereotypes in favour of boys as discussed above. Furthermore, in lower income households, girls do contribute significantly to do household chores such as cooking, fetching water and gathering firewood, farming, and taking care of siblings. Therefore when the investment for a girl's education is weighed against the need for household labour, the latter takes precedence (Davidson & Kanyuka, 1992).

Again, female children from low income families do poorly in school because of having more work tasks after school (Lockheed 1991). In focus group interviews with parents, conducted by Davidson and Kanyuka (1992), low income parents felt that girls doing work in the home would benefit the household more because school fees would be saved and household work would get done.



Within the classroom, socio cultural expectations are transmitted through gender biased "appropriate" behaviour, teacher responses to their pupils, and the academic support they give them, as well as the curriculum content Finn and Dulberg (1983) commented that many teachers knowingly or unknowingly discriminate against girls in the classroom because of the socio cultural context. Some teachers strongly believe that girls are academically inferior to boys. During class many teachers encourage students to participate in answering questions which puts girls in an awkward position since they have been taught in the traditional context to be quiet and submissive. Therefore teachers may see girls' lack of participation as confirming the inferior status of girls and view them as "less serious and capable" (Davidson & Kanyuka, 1992).

Research conducted in Ghana has identified several factors that lead girls to drop out of school. Although the demand for education is generally high for both sexes, preference for educating boys still persists (Hyde, 1993). This preference reflects traditional stereotypes of women's role, customary patrilineal inheritance systems and the perception that boys have greater prospects for formal-sector employment than girls. Hyde further said that women bear a larger share of household chores than men do, and the perception that these tasks are feminine continues. Mothers therefore are more likely to assign domestic tasks to their daughters than to their sons, particularly in rural areas where girls are expected to assist their mothers with household chores such as fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking and caring for young children. A study has observed that teenage girls in Ghana work longer hours than boys whether or not they are

enrolled in school (Lloyd, Cynthia, Anastasia, & Gage-Brandon, 1993). Heavy domestic responsibilities interfere with schooling, good academic performance and in extreme cases, lead to school withdrawal. Pregnancy and/or marriage can also precipitate the exit of females from school. Pregnant primary and secondary school students are expelled from school and may experience difficulties re-enrolling after giving birth. Although female students at institutions of higher learning are not expelled from school when they get pregnant, they are nonetheless often subjected to penalties like losing their boarding house privileges. It is important to note that male students are not punished for impregnating women (Lloyd et al., 1993).

Dolphyne (1987) and Manuh (1984) suggested that most schools in Ghana are boarding institutions and there are more such schools for males than for females. Even in co-educational schools, more dormitory facilities are reserved for boys. Hyde (1993) opined that the tendency for girls to attend lower-quality schools is one explanation for their poorer performance in national examinations in Ghana.

### **Summary**

It has been reviewed that there is a clear and powerful link between school attendance and academic performance. It is noted that higher achieving students are more likely to report higher level of attendance. Thus, it is well known and widely accepted that having children attending school on a regular basis is a key component of their academic success.

On the factors that influence attendance is motivation. Motivation has been identified as having a strong positive effect on students' attendance. Again, a good teacher can make a significant difference in both class attendance and students' understanding of subject matter. Class time has a great influence on attendance.

The home where a child is often seen most also influences class attendance. Everybody sees the home as a protective determinant for the child's development. Parental monitoring and participation in their wards' education influence students attendance in school and that families who are more involved with their wards schooling tend to be consistent with the expectations of the school and make sure their wards benefit from them. On the other hand, students are likely to become confused about how they should behave if the schools and families have different rules and expectations. Such confusion kills most students' interest from attending school.

The literature has revealed that two main factors on the success of any educational system are the rates at which young people drop out off or complete school each year. Issues that can influence whether children will drop out from school are parental support or supervision at home, role models, gang involvement and self-esteem. Children with high levels of aggressive behaviour and low levels of academic performance are the most likely to drop out of school.

The literature has also revealed that the location of a school and gender of students have influence on class attendance and academic performance. It is evident that regular attendance to school by both teachers and students has a

positive influence on students' performance. It has also been established that in the related literature review that females normally perform better on average than males on test of verbal abilities. However, males perform better, on the average, on tests related to mathematics.

Further, more there is a clear and powerful link between school attendance and academic performance. It is noted that higher achieving students are more likely to report higher level of attendance. Thus, it is well known and widely accepted that having children attending school on a regular basis is a key component of their academic success.

Moreover the literature has revealed that effective measures of minimizing truancy are very important for national development because truants and non - attendees tend to prefer fewer and different subjects (compared to other students who like a variety of Children's subjects), under-achieve or perform badly in a range of school subjects, disagree or have negative attitudes towards school rules and regulations, fail to do their homework, have fewer friends in school, have lower long term career aspirations, and tend to suffer from psychosomatic illnesses.

Even though literature has revealed on the historical development of academic performance, students' school performance, factors influencing students' school attendance, gender differences on class attendance and academic performance among others which are relevant to this study, most of the studies were done outside Ghana. Specifically, no known empirical study has been done on the relationship between students' class attendance and their academic

performance in the Kumasi Metropolis, hence, the gap in the literature which this study sought to fill.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the methodology and procedures used in this study. The chapter contains sections that address the areas of research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, instruments, data collection procedure, delimitation, limitation and data analysis procedure.

#### **Research Design**

It is commonly held by most people who engage in the research enterprise that the first issue that challenges a researcher is the choice and justification of appropriate methodology to study their particular problem. Particularly, what research design, the type of data to collect and analytical tools or procedures to employ (Borg & Gall, 1993). The research design specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analyzed. It, thus, provides the procedural outline for the conduct of any investigation. Gay (1996) mentions that the research designs indicate the basic structure of a study, the nature of hypothesis (or research questions) and variables involved in the study. Correlational design was the main research design. According to Burke and Larry (2008), correlational research attempts to find relationship between one quantitative independent variable and one quantitative dependent variable. This design was appropriate for this study because it sought to find out whether there is a relationship between

students' school attendance and their academic performance. In this study, students' school attendance was considered to be the independent variable and students' performance was the dependent. The descriptive and analytical sample survey was also employed because this study tried to describe some aspect of a population – students on a phenomenon by selecting unbiased of individuals from the population whose data was used for the analysis of the study.

Gay (1996) sees the descriptive survey as the process of collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer research questions concerning the status of the study. The researcher has therefore opted for the correlational design because taking the purpose of the study into consideration; it is the appropriate design that could lead to the drawing of meaningful conclusions from the study.

Attendance is generally considered to be a key component of student success in general classroom achievement. This correlational study which is quantitative in nature finds the association between individual student school attendance and their academic performance on their end of term examination for English, Mathematics, Integrated Science and Social Studies which are core subjects to determine if a relationship exists among these variables. Class attendance is considered an independent variable and academic performance as dependent variables because academic performance in this context depends on class attendance.

The research instrument used in this study was a special form designed with the help of my supervisors for the collection of secondary data,(records on students' school attendance from their class registers and records on students'

performance from their continuous assessment sheet) hence, the technique of documentary analysis. Documentary analysis is a method which is normally used to examine documents such as official records, papers, diaries, and transcripts of speeches (Burke & Christensen, 2008). The researcher in the present study analyzed students' class register to find out the number of attendance made during the first and second terms and their corresponding continuous assessment records.

### **Population**

The population consisted of all final year public junior high school students in the Kumasi Metropolis. There were 16,587 final year students in 180 junior high schools distributed into 22 circuits (Kumasi Metropolitan Education Directorate, 2007/2008). The population of final year students was of interest because they had been in school for at least two years where their attendance to school and performance could be easily monitored. The choice of the population was also informed by the circuit's closeness or remoteness to trading centres and other economic activities such as garage dealings and circuits remote from commercial centres.

### **Sample**

The sample comprised 1800 junior high school students drawn from 22 circuits in the Kumasi Metropolis. Nine hundred students were drawn from circuits close to commercial centres whilst the remaining 900 students were from circuits remote from commercial centres. The sub-sample sizes were deemed adequate because Borg and Gall (1993) have indicated that a correlational research requires a sample size of not fewer than 30 cases.



## **Sampling Technique**

The units of analysis in this study were the sampled students from the sampled schools. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the circuits, the schools, and the students from the sample schools to form the sampled population. The circuits were stratified into two strata circuits close to market centres (i.e. with many of the schools within a radius of one kilometer to the market) and circuits far away from market centres (i.e. with many of the schools more than one kilometer far away from the market) because I felt that there might be different degrees of association between schools close to market centres and those far away.

Eleven circuits were identified to be close to market centres while the other eleven were quite remote from market centres. The identification of circuits' closeness to market centres or otherwise was based on my own judgment based on my familiarity with the research area. I attended a teacher training college in Kumasi and did my teaching practice as well in the metropolis. Table 1 shows the circuits in the metropolis and their distribution by proximity or distance to or from commercial centres.

Table 1

**Circuits in the Kumasi Metropolis**

<i>Circuits Close To Market Centres</i>	<i>Circuits Far From Market Centre</i>
<i>Suame</i>	<i>Dichemso</i>
<i>Bantema</i>	<i>Adiebeba</i>
<i>Ashanti New Town</i>	<i>Weweso</i>
<i>Old Tafo</i>	<i>Asem</i>
<i>Breman</i>	<i>Asokore Manpong</i>
<i>Amankwatia</i>	<i>Agric</i>
<i>Kejetia</i>	<i>Bohyen</i>
<i>Asokwa</i>	<i>Atonsu</i>
<i>Aboabo</i>	<i>Kwadaso</i>
<i>Asawasi</i>	<i>Santasi</i>
<i>Tafo/Pankrono</i>	<i>Oforikrum</i>

Since the circuits in the metropolis were almost of equal sizes, six circuits were randomly selected from each stratum using the lottery method. The names of all the circuits were written on pieces of paper for each stratum, folded and picked without replacing them until six circuits from each were obtained. A total of 12 circuits namely: Suame, Bantema, Kejetia, Old Tafo, Ashanti New Town, Amankwatia, Kwadaso, Santasi, Asem, Weweso, Dichemso, and Atonsu were obtained. The sampled circuits and their distributions by distance to and from commercial centres are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

**Circuits Sampled in the Kumasi Metropolis**

Close to Commercial Centres	Not Close To Commercial Centres
Suame	Kwadaso
Bantema	Santasi
Kejetia	Asem
Old Tafo	Weweso
Ashanti New Town	Dichemso
Amankwatia	Atonsu

Next, schools in the sampled circuits were further sampled randomly using the lottery method. All the schools in the circuits were assigned YES/NO on pieces of paper, folded, mixed together and put into a bowl. The folded pieces of paper were picked after each reshuffle without replacing them. The process continued until all the required number of schools was obtained. The sampled schools and their circuits are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

**Sampled schools and their circuits in the Kumasi Metropolis**

<i>Close To Commercial Centres</i>	<i>Far From Commercial Centres</i>
<b><i>Suame</i></b>	<b><i>Dichemso</i></b>
<i>Suame M/A</i>	<i>Odumasi Extension</i>
<i>Suame Salvation Army</i>	<i>Duase R/C</i>
<i>Suame Methodist</i>	<i>New Tafo M/A</i>
<i>Ghana Muslim Mission</i>	<i>Yennyawso Presby</i>
<b><i>Bantama</i></b>	<i>Anyaaano M/A</i>
<i>Bantema Methodist</i>	<b><i>Atonsu</i></b>
<i>State Girls</i>	<i>Bethel Presby</i>
<i>Bantema M/A</i>	<i>Shakuriya Islamic</i>
<i>St. Anthony's R/C</i>	<i>Chirapatre R/C</i>
<i>Akosa M/A</i>	<i>Atonsu M/A 'A'</i>
<i>New Bantema M/A 'B'</i>	<i>Atonsu M/A 'B'</i>
<b><i>Ashanti New Town</i></b>	<i>Atonsu M/A</i>
<i>K.O. Methodist A'</i>	<b><i>Santasi</i></b>
<i>K.O. Methodist B'</i>	<i>Opoku Ware M/A</i>
<i>St. Anne Anglican</i>	<i>Martyrys of Uganda R/C</i>
<i>Kumasi R/C Girls</i>	<b><i>Weweso</i></b>
<i>Afia Kobi Serwaa Ampe</i>	<i>Wilson SDA</i>
<b><i>Amankwatia</i></b>	<i>Kokoben M/A</i>
<i>AME Zion</i>	<i>Kotei-Deduako</i>

<i>T.I. Ahmadiyya 'A'</i>	<b><i>Asem</i></b>
<i>Awere M/A</i>	<i>Asem Boys M/A</i>
<i>St. Paul's R/C</i>	<i>St. Cyprian's Anglican</i>
<i>Amakom Abrotia M/A</i>	<i>Asem Islamic</i>
<i>Awere M/A</i>	<i>Adventist M/A</i>
<b><i>Kejetia</i></b>	<i>St. Augustine's Anglican</i>
<i>St. Peter's R/C</i>	<i>Asem Mixed Experimental M/A</i>
<i>Garrison Basic</i>	<b><i>Kwadaso</i></b>
<i>Yaa Achiaa M/A</i>	<i>Nyankyerenease Methodist</i>
<i>Army Basic</i>	<i>Kwadaso SDA</i>
<b><i>Old Tafo</i></b>	<i>Apatrapa R/C</i>
<i>Rockanje Presby</i>	<i>Tanoso Anglican 'B'</i>
<i>Old Tafo M/A</i>	<i>Apatrapa M/A</i>
<i>Old Tafo SD</i>	<i>Prempeh College M/A 'B'</i>
<i>St. Bernadette's R/C</i>	<i>4 Battalion Basic</i>
<i>Umar Bin Khatab</i>	<i>Asuoyeboah M/A</i>

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Finally, 30 final year students were randomly selected from each school to form the sample size for the study. In each school, numbers one to “N” which corresponded to the number of names in the attendance register were written on pieces of paper. The papers were folded and mixed together. Then the lottery method was used to select 30 numbers: students whose names bore these numbers

were included in the sample. Thus, there were 1,800 students altogether; 900 from schools close to commercial centres and 900 remote from commercial centres.

### **Instruments**

A form was designed to show students' names, attendance, as well as first and second terms examination marks in English, Mathematics, integrated science and Social Studies which are the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) core subjects (See Appendix B).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

To facilitate the data collection process, an introductory letter was sought from the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration of the University of Cape Coast by the researcher to be given to the heads of the sampled schools (Appendix A). In this letter, the purpose of the study was stated and the cooperation of the school authorities was sought. To ensure effective collection of the needed data, visits were made personally to the selected schools. The class registers and students continuous assessment records were obtained, perused and the relevant information recorded on the forms specially designed for the purpose. The classroom teachers were made to assist in the compilation of the records. The researcher used five weeks for the data collection exercise. In all, data were collected from 60 schools within 12 circuits in the Kumasi Metropolis. Data were obtained from all the schools sampled.

## **Data Analysis Procedure**

Data on students' class attendance and their academic performance were gathered. Attendance for the two terms was measured out of 110 that is for each term school was in session for 15 weeks. On performance four subjects which are Basic Education Certificate Examination core subjects were considered (Mathematics, English, Social Studies and Integrated Science) each subject was scored out of 100 for each term. Therefore, the total possible performance (score) for each student for the two terms was out of 800. Thus, for one term the total possible performance (score) for each student was 400.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS) version 15.0 software. All the hypotheses raised in the study were tested using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ), which considers not ranks of pairs but magnitudes of observations or determination of associations in variables. A correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) indicates both the type of correlation and the strength of the relationship. A positive correlation, indicated by a coefficient having positive sign, suggests that the two variables are associated in such a way that an increase or decrease in one is associated with an increase or decrease in the other. If there is a relationship between two variables, it means that a person's relative position on one variable bears a relation to his or her relative on the other variables. The numerical size of a correlation co-efficient indicates the strength of the relationship while the sign (positive or negative) indicates the direction of the relationship. Thus, when ( $r$ ) is close to zero, it is said to be weak and when it is zero, it is said that there is no relationship between the variables involved.

A negative correlation, suggests an inverse relationship between the variables. In this case an increase in one variable is associated with a decrease in the other. A zero correlation indicates that there is no linear relationship between the two variables and changes in one variable are not associated with changes in the other variable.

The range of the coefficient is between -1 and +1. The correlation is generally considered to be:

1. Very low if the coefficient has a value under 0.20;
2. Low if the coefficient has value between 0.21 and 0.40;
3. Moderate if the coefficient has value between 0.41 and 0.70;
4. High if the coefficient has value between 0.71 and 0.91; and
5. Very high if the coefficient is over 0.91 (Sarantakos, 2005). Table 4 shows a planned matrix for the study.

Table 4

**Matrix for data analysis**

Data Type	Research Design	Source of Data	Hypothesis	Statistical Method
Interval	Correlational study	Documentary analysis		Pearsons' correlation and the independent samples t-test.



Total scores for students from students' previous records for year two; first and second terms together with their total attendance for respective terms were used to determine the association between students' class attendance and their academic performance. To this, the mean scores from the pass rates of students in English, Mathematics, Integrated Science and Social Studies which are core subjects were correlated with the mean scores of students' attendance for the first and second terms respectively. The schools were assured that these documents would be used only for the purposes of academic exercise.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the analyses. In the descriptive statistic, means and standard deviations were used to describe the various relationships established in the study. Amoah (2001) opined that, two or more tests used together often yield a higher correlation with a criterion of success than does either test alone. On descriptive statistics, Pearson's product moment correlation co-efficient ( $r$ ) and the independent samples t-test were used to test for the significance of ( $r$ ) at  $p < .05$ . The p-value is the probability of observing a value of the test statistic at least as extreme as that observed under the null hypothesis (Gordor & Howard, 2006).

In judging the statistical significance, of the computed statistic, which is the co-efficient, any statistic, whose p-value was greater than .05 was not accepted as being statistically significant. Som (1975) stipulated that researches involving behavioural science tend to be complex to the extent that it is unrealistic to set an alpha at any level lower than 0.05.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to determine if there existed a significant relationship between students' class attendance and their academic achievement. Thus, a difference in students' class attendance results significantly in their academic achievement. Data were collected from students' class registers and their corresponding continuous assessment record on all the core subjects (Mathematics, English, Integrated Science and Social Studies). In all, data were collected from 1,800 students from 60 public junior high secondary schools in the Kumasi Metropolis. The response rate was 100%. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

The unit of analysis in this study was the student because, that is where my interest was to find out the relationship between class attendance and students' academic achievement so that a sound generalization about students' class attendance and their academic performance could be made.

Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were calculated for all the data to facilitate description of the state of affairs. The mean score gives a more stable central tendency for scores of a group while the standard deviation measures the extent to which the scores in a distribution deviated from the mean.

The combined mean and standard deviation gives a good description of how the individuals within the sample scored for a particular measure.

The Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient ( $r$ ) and the independent samples t-test were used through SPSS Version 15 to determine the relationship between students' class attendance and their academic performance as well as differences in class attendance and academic performance between males and females students, class attendance and academic performance of students in schools close to commercial centres and schools far from commercial centres and finally class attendance and academic performance of students with average scores above and those below the average scores.

Independent samples t-test was used to determine whether there existed significant difference between class attendance, and academic performance of: male and female students, students in schools near commercial centers and those far from commercial centers. The independent samples t-test was again used to determine whether there is a significant difference in class attendance of students with above average scores (performance) and students with below average scores. All the hypotheses were tested at 95% confidence level.

### **Background Information about the Respondents**

The sample in this study consisted of 1800 JHS 3 students from all the JHS public schools in the Kumasi metropolis during the 2007/2008 academic year. Of this population, 770(42.8%) were females while 1030(57.2%) were males. The breakdown as to the number of male or female students is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

**Population Demographics of Male and Female Students in the Sampled**

**Schools**

Sex	N	%
Male	1030	57.2
Female	770	42.8
Total	1800	100

Of the total population of 1800 students, 900 representing 50% were in schools close to commercial centers while another 900 representing 50% were students in schools far away from commercial centers. This is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

**Demographics of Students in Schools Close to or Far from Commercial**

**Centers**

Location	N	%
Students in schools close to		
Commercial centres	900	50
Students in schools far from		
Commercial centres	900	50
Total	1800	100

Of the total population of 1800, 484 representing 53.8% were males in schools close to commercial centres while 416 representing 46.2% were females. Again,

354 representing 39.3% were females in schools far from commercial centres as against 546 representing 60.7% males. The summary is shown in Table 7.

Table 7

**Demographics of Male and Female Students in Schools Close to or Far from Commercial Centres**

Location	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
School close to						
Commercial activities	484	53.8	416	46.2	900	100
Schools far from						
Commercial activities	546	60.7	354	39.3	900	100

Students’ performance scores were found using only four subjects (English, Mathematics, Integrated Science and Social Studies). Each subject was over 100. Therefore, for two terms, the total possible performance score for the four subjects was 800. Thus, the average possible performance score for the two terms was 400. So, 400 was used to categories the students into two.

Students with scores of 400 and above were considered as those with “average performance” and those who had scores below 400 were considered as “below average performance”.

Of the total population of 1800, 1241 representing 69 % were students with average scores and above whiles 559 representing 31% were students with below average score. The summary is shown in Table 8.

Table 8

**Demographics of Students with Average Scores and Above and those Below the Average Score**

Level of performance	N	%
Students with average		
Scores and above	1241	69
Students below average Score	559	31
Total	18,00	100

Table 9 presents the number of male and female students who had average scores and above and those below the average score. Of the 1800 students, 740 representing 41.1 % were males who had average score and above while 290 representing 16.1 % were below the average score. Again, 501 representing 27.8% were females with average score and above while 269 representing 14.9% were those below the average score.

Table 9

**Demographics of Male and Female Students with Average Score and Above and those below the Average Score**

Level of performance	Male		Female		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
<b>Students with average</b>					
Score and above	740	41.1	501	27.8	1241
<b>Students below the</b>					
average score	290	16.1	269	14.9	559

Of the total population of 1800 students, 670 representing 37.2% were students who had average scores and above in schools not close to commercial activities whiles 230 representing 12.8% were those below the average score. Again 571 representing 31.7% were students who had average score and above in schools close to commercial activities whiles 329 representing 18.3% had scores below the average score. The summary is shown in Table 10

Table 10

**Demographics of Students who had Average Score and Above and those Students Below the Average Score and Above in Schools close to or far from Commercial Centres**

Location of a school	Scores of students	N	%
Schools close to commercial centres	Average score and above	571	31.7%
	Below the average score	329	18.3%
Schools not close to commercial centres	Average score and above	670	37.2%
	Below the average score	230	12.8%
Total		1,800	100

The following hypotheses were tested:

**Research Hypothesis 1**

Ho: There is no significant relationship between students' class attendance and their academic performance.

Hi: There is a significant relationship between students' class attendance and their academic performance.

Data on students' class attendance and their academic performance were gathered. Attendance for the two terms was measured out of 110 that is for each term school was in session for 15 weeks. On performance four subjects which are Basic Education Certificate Examination core subjects were considered



(Mathematics, English, Social studies and Integrated Science). Each subject was scored out of 100 for each term. Therefore, the total performance (score) for each student for the two terms was out of 800.

To find whether a linear relationship exists between the two variables, the scores on performance were plotted against that on attendance. The resulting graph as in Figure 1 revealed that a relationship exists between the two variables (performance and attendance).

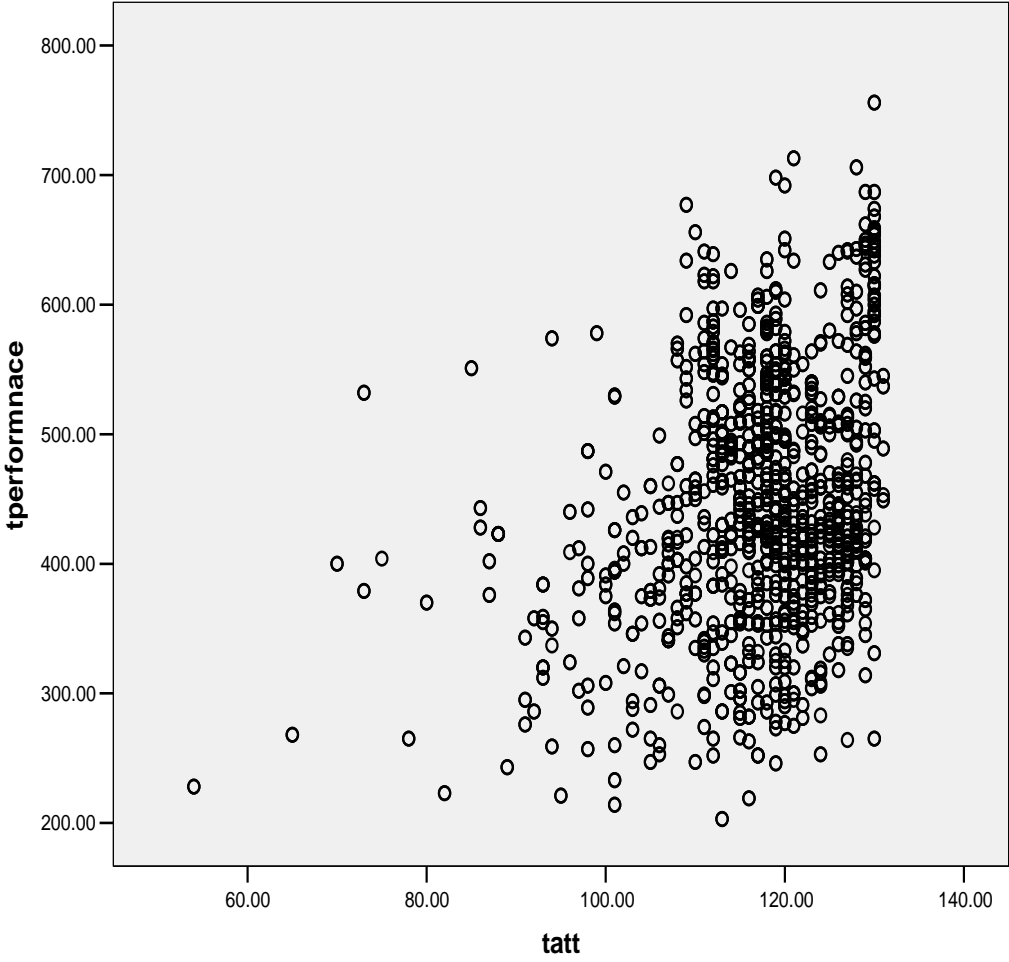


Figure 1: **Graph of performance against attendance**

However, the graph could not show the strength of the relationship so to determine the strength of the relationship the Pearson- product moment correlation was used. The result (see appendix C) as shown in Table 6 gave a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.310 between class attendance and academic performance which indicates a fairly positive relationship between the variables. This correlation might have resulted by chance so there was the need to test whether the correlation coefficient( $r$ ) was significant, that is if it did not result purely by chance. When this correlation coefficient ( $r=0.310$ ) was tested at 5% significant level the result revealed that it was statistically significant.

This coefficient does not necessarily mean that attendance alone explains performance. The performance variable might have been influence by other variables. To determine the amount of variation in performance explained by attendance, the coefficient of determination was calculated and it was found to be 0.1369. This implies attendance explains 14% of the variation in students' performances and that suggests that other factors were responsible for the remaining variance.

Table 11

**Correlation between Performance and Class attendance**

		Total performance	Total attendance
Total performance	Pearson correlation	1	
	Covariance	9750.5	
	Sample size	1800	
Total attendance	Pearson correlation	0.310**	1
	Covariance	303.8	98.6
	Sample size	1800	1800

\*\* correlation is significant at the .05 alpha level (2- tailed)

Adoom (2007) suggested that the issue of large class sizes prevents teachers from giving their best to improving students' performance when it had to do with marking assignments and teaching. He further said that, a well motivated teacher will definitely be a performer to help improve students' performance in school.

Since the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMCC) indicated a statistically significant relationship ( $r = .310$ ,  $p < .05$ ) between class attendance and academic performance. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between students' class attendance and their academic performance was rejected. Railsback (2004) maintained that it is well known and widely accepted that having children attending school on a regular basis is a key component of their academic success. Moore (2005) found that high rates of attendance correlate strongly with high grades. On the part of Horn and

Chen (1998), time is the most important determinant of student success and each unit of time in the class itself provided, among all the class related activities, the greatest improvement in students' academic performance. Chung (2004) reported a significant correlation between achievement and attendance, homework, and mini-quizzes. Thus, students' achievement is a dependant of class attendance as mini-quizzes depend on home. In an attempt to control attendance (Berenson, Carter, & Norwoods, 1992) put in place a 'compulsory attendance policy' that combined reward and punishment protocols in which college students in America were allowed three unexcused absences, with additional unexcused absences possibly resulting in dismissal from the course. Eventually, students with no more than one absence between exam dates were awarded five points for that exam score. Consequently, there was improvement in attendance rates, and the study showed that increased attendance rates correlates with increased achievement. From this finding, one can confidently say that students' class attendance correlates strongly with their academic performance. Thus, a higher score in attendance gives a higher score in performance or a lower score in attendance gives a lower score in performance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

## Research Hypothesis 2

Ho: There is no significant difference in (a) class attendance and (b) academic performance of male and female students.

Hi: There is a significant difference in (a) class attendance and (b) academic performance of male and female students.

To test this hypothesis the independent samples t-test was used because the performance or attendance of a male student does not depend on that of a female student. The test was run at 5% significant level, two tailed. The results of the tests (See Appendix D) are shown in Tables 12 and 13.

Table 12

### Independent samples t-test on Male and Female students' class attendance

Gender	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t-value	p-value
Males	1,030	116.7	9.6		
				1.39	0.17
Females	770	117.4	10.4		

Alpha = .05 (2-tailed)

On attendance, Table 12 reveals that male students had a mean of 116.7 and a standard deviation of 9.583 while their female counterparts had a mean of 117.3 and 10.3667 standard deviation. This shows that female students attended class more than male students. However, the standard deviation (SD=10.4) of the females indicates that their individual scores on class attendance varied more than that of the males (SD=9.6). When the means were tested using the independent samples t-test at 5% significant level, two-tailed, the results revealed no

significant difference between their attendance ( $t = 1.386$ ,  $p = 0.166$ ). Thus, there was no statistical significant difference between the mean class attendance by male and female students.

Again, to find out whether there was significant difference in the performance of male and female students the independent samples t- test was used. The result of the independent samples t- test at 0.05 alpha level, two-tailed on the performance of male and female students as in Table 12 shows that the male students did significantly better than the female students. However, when the effect size ( $d$ ) was calculated it was found to be very small ( $d = 0.094$ ). According to Cohen (1988) effect size of  $< 0.2$ ,  $0.2 < d < 0.8$  and  $d > 0.8$  respectively indicate small, medium and large mean difference.

Table 13

**Independent sample t-test of male and female students' performance**

Gender	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t-value	p-value	d-value
Male	1,030	451.27	95.19			
				1.98	0.048**	0.094
Female	770	441.84	103.13			

\*\* significant at  $p=.05$ , 2-tailed

Table 13 shows that female students had a mean of 441.84 and male students had a mean score of 451.27 which indicates that male students performed better than female students. Kirk (2000) found that young men scored higher on both the verbal and quantitative sections of scholastic achievement test than young women. Table 13 also shows that there was a lower variability in male

students performance (SD=95.19) than the performance of female students (SD =103.13)

The two tests conducted on Hypothesis 2 indicate that, there was no significant difference in the class attendance of male and female students but there was a significant difference in their academic performance. Well, it could be that males are academically better than females naturally like what Hedges and Nowell (1995) said about males and females. They cemented that males as a whole have their cognitive abilities to be much more variable than females. These imply that attendance has no influence on the academic performance of male and female students. Other factors may explain why male students performed better than female students. The debate on gender differences in cognitive abilities has actually evolved out of the debate on biological versus social determinism. The biological perspective on sex differences and cognitive performance considers social factors to be trivial or subordinate to biological factors like brain structure. Lynn (2004) asserts that males have larger average brain sizes than females and therefore, would be expected to have higher average IQs<sup>1</sup>. Al-Emadi (2003) argued that the socialization of boys and girls and the way of living partially explains the differential gender effects on achievement and achievement related variables. Girls are more restricted and confined to home, especially during adolescence than boys are.

Milton and Kuppenbach (1997), Lee (1988) and Leigh-Doyle (1991) suggested that a number of factors constitute barriers to girls' full participation in school which result in their academic performance. Some of these barriers are

"formal" in that they are linked to institutional policies, practices and procedures while others are "informal," being mainly socio-cultural in nature and arising from stereotyped attitudes and beliefs about women's roles and capabilities.

This research finding refutes a number of findings reviewed in this study. Previous research elsewhere indicated that females earn higher grades than males, and some possible explanations have been proposed by researchers. The reasons proposed are both biological and environmental (Henning-Stout & Close-Conoley, 1992). The 1992 study revealed that in carefully controlled studies of learning disabilities, males have been found to have more learning disabilities than females by a ratio of two to one. Fine (1987) opined that, boys do not fare as well as girls, because they are encouraged to challenge social norms as an expression of masculinity. Thorne (1993) concludes that many male students associate good grades at school with being girl-like, and, therefore, they do not want to make good grades. The present study suggests that among the population studied, this is not necessarily the case.

### **Research Hypothesis 3**

Ho: There is no significant difference in (a) Class attendance and (b) academic performance of students in schools near commercial activities.

Hi: There is a significant difference in (a) Class attendance and (b) academic performance of students in schools near commercial activities.

The independent samples t-test was first conducted on class attendance of students in schools near commercial activities and those not close to commercial centres. The result is shown in Table 14.



Table 14

**Independent samples t-test on Attendance of Students in Schools close to Commercial Centres and those far from Commercial Centres**

Location	N	Mean	Std	t-value	p-value	d-value
Of school			Deviation			
Schools not close to commercial centres	900	118.68	9.13			
Schools close to commercial centres.	900	115.39	10.38	7.14	.00**	0.34

\*\* significant at  $p=.05$ , 2-tailed

It was found from Table 14 that students in schools not closer to market centres attend school more than students in schools closer to commercial activities. The students in schools not close to market centres had a mean of 118.68 and 9.13 standard deviation while their counterparts in schools close to commercial activities had a mean of 115.39 and a standard deviation of 10.38 respectively. The standard deviation of students in schools closer to market centres (SD=10.38) also indicate that there was much variation in their individual scores on attendance than those of students in schools not close to market centres (SD =9.13).

Independent samples t-test at 5% alpha level done to find if there existed a statistically significant difference between their attendance revealed that, the two

means are statistically significant [ $t = 7.136$ ,  $p = .000$  (two-tailed)]. That is students in schools closer to market centres had a statistically significant lower score in attendance than students in schools not closer to market centres. The effect size was also calculated to be medium ( $d=0.34$ ).

Again, students in schools not closer to commercial activities had a higher mean score in performance than their counterparts in schools close to commercial activities. The result is shown in Table 15.

Their means were 470.543 and 425.429 respectively which shows that students in schools not closer to commercial centres performed better than their counterparts in schools closer to commercial centres.

The independent samples t-test at .05 significant level showed that the two means were significantly different. This is an indication that students in schools not close to commercial activities perform significantly better than students in schools close to commercial centres [ $t = 9.895$ ,  $p = .000$ , (two-tailed)].

Table 15

**Independent samples t-test in performance of students found in schools close to commercial centres and those not close to commercial centres**

Location of school	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t-value	p-value	d-value
Not close to commercial centre	900	470.543	103.678	9.89	0.00**	0.467
Close to commercial centre	900	425.429	88.555			

\*\*Significant at p=.05, (2 tailed)

The effect size found to be medium ( $d = 0.47$ ). Thus, location of a school affects class attendance and academic performance of students and so, the null hypothesis which stated no statistically significant difference in students' class attendance and their academic performance with respect to location is therefore rejected. The conclusion here is that a schools' location has a significant difference in the class attendance and academic performance of students. Yinusa and Basil (2008) stipulated that markets and garages located near schools posed threat to students as they endanger their concentration for effective learning and high academic performance. On the side of Thorne (1993), opined that a good school environment which is spacious, has the needed learning and teaching materials, devoid of any form of disturbances and with teachers of good attitude help students to improve upon their academic performance. Barth (1984) and

McCluskey et al. (2004) identified unsafe school environment, lack of effective and consistent school policies related to attendance, had a higher probability of students' truancy than any other for student achievement. Dekalb (1999) suggested that the learning environment was also important to the improvement in the performance of students. To him, learners have physiological, psychological and social needs and interest that direct and focus their attention in classroom so, a school environment devoid of disturbances and with highly stimulated things such as television and special effects movies improve students' performance as they have become accustomed to high levels of stimulation on a daily basis and too often expects similar experiences when they enter the classroom to improve upon their learning and performance.

This finding in short, supports the finding to research hypothesis 1 that a higher score in attendance could lead to a higher score in performance or a lower score in attendance could lead to a lower score in performance.

#### **Research Hypothesis 4**

Ho: There is no significant difference in class attendance of students with average scores and above, and with those below average score.

Hi: There is significant difference in class attendance of students with average scores and above, and students with below average score.

In all, four core subjects each scored over 100% for the two terms resulted in a total of 800. Students' performance scores were found using only four subjects (English, Mathematics, Integrated Science and Social Studies. Each subject was over 100. Therefore, for two terms the total possible performance score for the

four subjects was 800. So, the average possible performance score for the two terms was 400 and this was used to categorize the students into two.

Students with scores of 400 and above were considered as those with “average performance” and those who had scores below 400 were considered as “below average performance”. Table 16 shows the result of a t-test on the class attendance of students with average and above scores, and students with below average scores.

Students with average score and above had a mean of 118.708 and standard deviation of 8.59 while their counterparts with below the average score had a mean of 113.159 and a standard deviation of 11.513 respectively. This indicates that students with average score and above have greater class attendance than those with below the average score. Kinesty and Waldron (2006) observed that the relationship between students’ achievement and attendance has been argued to be a recursive one in which those students who are lower performing are more likely to reduce their attendance rate which in turn impacts their subsequent achievement and so on until finally they drop out. The summary is shown in Table 16.

To ascertain if there exists a significant difference between the two means, an independent t-test was conducted at an alpha level of .05 and the result revealed that the difference is statistically significant. A calculated effect size of 0.52 also indicates that the difference was medium. The implication is also that, students with high academic performance had high class attendance ( $t = 10.189$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected to be concluded that, there is a

significant difference between the variables involved in terms of class attendance and the magnitude of academic performance.

Table 16

**Independent samples t-test in the attendance of students with average scores and above and students below the average score**

student	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t-value	p-value	d- value
Those with average scores and above	1240	118.71	8.59			
				10.19	0.00**	0.52
Those with below average scores	559	113.16	11.51			

\*\*Significant at p=.05, (2 tailed)

This version supports what Horn and Chen (1998) said on high achieving students. They stipulated that higher achieving students are more likely to report higher levels of attendance. Thus, once achievement is controlled for, there is little variation for attendance. Again, Moore (2005) revealed that high rate of attendance correlates strongly with high rate of performance. Moreover, (Klem & Connell, 2004) opined that the relationship between student achievement and attendance has been argued to be a recursive one in which those students who are lower performing are more likely to reduce their attendance rate which in turn impacts their subsequent achievement and so on until finally they drop out.

Dale and Norma (1994) drawn the following conclusion about students' school attendance and their academic achievements

1. Research indicates that attendance is statistically significant in explaining class grade and overall performance of students.
2. Students who miss class frequently significantly increase their odds of a poor grade in a given course.
3. A case can be made that requiring attendance can be a successful means of improving the value added of any course.

This further revealed that, there is a statistically relationship between students' class attendance and their academic performance.

### **Summary**

All the differences or the relationship established in this study were positive in nature. However, they were not strong. The data in this study suggested that a relationship exist between class attendance and academic performance, as differences also exist in class attendance and academic performance with respect to the location of a school and level of performance. The difference found in academic performance with respect to gender too was not explained by class attendance but other extraneous variables one can think of. The data of the study did not support any of the null hypotheses raised except the gender difference in academic performance.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Summary of the Study Process**

The purpose of the study was to determine if a significant difference existed between class attendance and academic performance or achievement. The variables of class attendance and academic performance, school closeness to commercial activities or not, gender, performance of low and high achievers as well as students of low and high class attendance were considered. Data were collected from 1800 JHS 3 students and were analyzed using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient( $r$ ), and the independent samples t- test, using SPSS Version 15. A summary of the findings are presented along with conclusions and recommendations for future research.

**Summary of Findings**

The following are the null hypotheses and the summary of the findings related to them.

There is no significance difference between students' class attendance and their academic performance. Internationally, there is considerable evidence to suggest that class attendance levels are strongly related to academic performance.



Findings for class attendance and academic performance in the local level have also confirmed most of the literature reviewed. The fact here is that, high rates of students' class attendance correlates strongly with high grades.

There is no significance difference between class attendance and academic performance of male and female students in JHS 3.

Findings for gender against attendance and academic performance indicated no significant difference but a significant difference in their performance due to other unknown variables. This means that any differences in their performance could be due to other extraneous variables or circumstances but not class attendance.

There is no significant difference between class attendance and academic performance of students in schools close to commercial centres and those far away from commercial centres.

The third hypothesis indicated a significant difference between the variables involved. Thus, students in schools far away from commercial centres perform academically better than their counterparts found in schools close to commercial centres (see Appendix E) and that suggests that the location of a school really had effect on students' class attendance and academic performance.

Results from the fourth hypothesis indicated a significant difference between class attendance of students with average academic score and above and students below the average score (see Appendix F). The study revealed that students with good grades tend to have good class attendance. Thus as students'

class attendance goes high, their academic performance goes high or as class attendance goes down, academic performance also goes down.

### **Conclusions**

The results of this study substantiate some of the earlier cited literature and at the same time, refute some others. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between students' class attendance and their academic performance. The null hypothesis for such hypothesis one has therefore been rejected because it has not been confirmed by the study.

Moreover, there are significant differences in students' class attendance and their academic performance with respect to location of a school and the level of one's academic performance. The third and fourth null hypotheses have also been rejected.

However, there is a significant difference in the performance of students with respect to gender caused not by attendance but other extraneous variables.

This study has contributed to knowledge on the correlation between students' class attendance and their academic performance. It has brought to fore the local perspective on attendance and performance empirically. This study is the first of its kind so far as correlational study on attendance and performance is concerned in the Kumasi Metropolis. One interesting aspect of the study is that male students perform better than their female counterpart which is not explained by class attendance. Rather other unknown factors appear to be at play.

## **Recommendations**

In relation to the findings and conclusions established above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Since students' class attendance correlates strongly with their academic performance so educational authorities should come out with effective measures of ensuring students regular attendance in schools because there is a critical link between effective educational strategies and students attendance rates. Educators can explore creative techniques to increase class attendance, such as innovative teaching methods and better equipped classrooms.
2. Truants must be monitored by school authorities to see to their regularities in school because truancy adversely affects students' performance in school. They show little connection with school, exhibit low academic motivation and consequently show poor school performance.
3. The results of the study indicated that there is a significant difference between class attendance and academic performance of students in schools close to commercial centres and those that are not. It is therefore relevant for planners and management of education to site schools away from commercial centres so that students' academic performance will not be disturbed.
4. Both male and female students have all qualified to be at JHS 3 but measures for which class attendance is not inclusive should be put in place to help girls improve upon their academic performance. It is further recommended that both males and females must be given equal chances to any programme they can offer.

5. Policy makers should consider females where necessary when planning education programmes in Ghana and note that not all female students are capable of doing what male students can do. For example, entry requirements to senior high schools (SHS) must be more favourable to females than males.
6. Many JHS students in schools close to commercial activities are academically unprepared for the challenges ahead of them as the commercial activities place objections for them to forgo their studies in schools to attend to some commercial activities. Policy makers in education should institute scholarship schemes for regular students in the already schools sited close to commercial centres such as markets and garage dealings so that, it will serve as motivation to students and help improve upon their concentrations at school.
7. The study revealed that there is no significantly difference between class attendance of male and female students and that other factors come in for males to perform better than females. The government and other stakeholders in education should try as much as possible to examine some of the factors that account for low academic performance in females so as to take appropriate measures to curb them and help the females perform better in future.
8. It is likely that students who are academically good can retrogress if their class attendance tend to be low because the study revealed a significant difference in class attendance of students with average scores and above and those below the average score, school authorities should try as much as

possible to keep eye on such students and see to it that they attend school regularly.

9. Supervision should be strengthened and circuit supervisors should be more regular in the schools. Regular visits to the schools would motivate the teachers to be more regular and early in school. When pupils realize that supervisors are regular in visiting the schools and teachers are also present always, they would be challenged to change their attitude towards school
10. Students need sensitization and past students from the community who have made progress in their fields need to be invited regularly to talk to the students on the need for regular attendance. They would serve as role models and motivators.
11. Teachers need to motivate the children who do not attend classes regularly to ensure better performance. Teachers should attempt to arouse the interest and the joy in each lesson they teach. They could do this through the use of humor in the classroom, paying individual attention to the students, using different methods to teaching and positive reinforcements
13. School administrators and teachers can promote students engagements in school or students' class attendance and academic performance by continually interacting with families of students about issues related to learning and engagement in school as well as developing common messages about the value of education.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

It was deduced from the study that male students perform better than their female counterpart which is not explained by class attendance. Rather other unknown factors appear to be at play. It is suggested that other researchers are conducted to ascertain such unknown factors.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

**APPENDIX B**  
**INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION**

**Appendix C**

**OUTPUT OF HYPOTHESIS 1**

**Hypothesis 1**

**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std	N
Tperformance	447.2339	98.74454	1800
Tatt	116.9833	9.92836	1800

**Correlations**

		tperformance	Tatt
tperformance Correlation	Pearson	1	.310**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of Squares and products	17541120.53	546475.0
	Cross-Covariance N	9750.484 1800	303.766 1800
tatt Correlation	Pearson	.310**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of Squares and products	546475.017	
	Cross-Covariance N	303.766 1800	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

## Appendix D

### OUTPUT OF HYPOTHESIS 2

#### Hypothesis 2

#### Group Statistics

sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
tperformance male	1030	451.2670	95.18614	2.96589
female	770	441.8390	103.12921	3.71652

#### Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t- test		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
tperformance	Equal variance assumed	4.833	.028	2.006	1798	.045
	Equal variances not assumed			1.983	1581.127	.048

#### Group Statistics

sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
tatt male	1030	116.7029	9.58310	.29860
female	770	117.3584	10.36669	.37359

#### Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. 2-tailed)	M difference
tatt	Equal variance assumed	.849	.357	-1.386	1798	.166	
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.371	1582.661	.171	

**Appendix E**

**OUTPUT OF HYPOTHESIS 3**

**Hypothesis 3**

**Group Statistics**

Location	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
tatt not close to market centers	900	118.6793	9.12511	.30937
close to market enters	900	115.3968	10.38176	.34043

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	M difference
tatt	Equal variance assumed	4.706	.030	7.105	1798	.000	3
	Equal variances not assumed			7.136	1791.104	.000	3

**Group Statistics**

location	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
tatt not close to market centers	870	470.5425	103.67851	3.51503
close to market enters	930	425.4290	88.55497	2.90383

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
tperformance	Equal variance assumed	32.632	.000	9.946	1798	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			9.895	1713.389	.000



## Appendix F

### OUTPUT OF HYPOTHESIS 4

#### Hypothesis 4

average	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
tatt score greater or equal	1240	118.7089	8.59340	.24404
400 Score below 400	559	113.1592	11.51319	.48696

#### Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. 2-tailed)	M difference
tatt	Equal variance assumed	58.920	.000	11.353	1797	.000	5.
	Equal variances not assumed			10.189	849.350	.000	