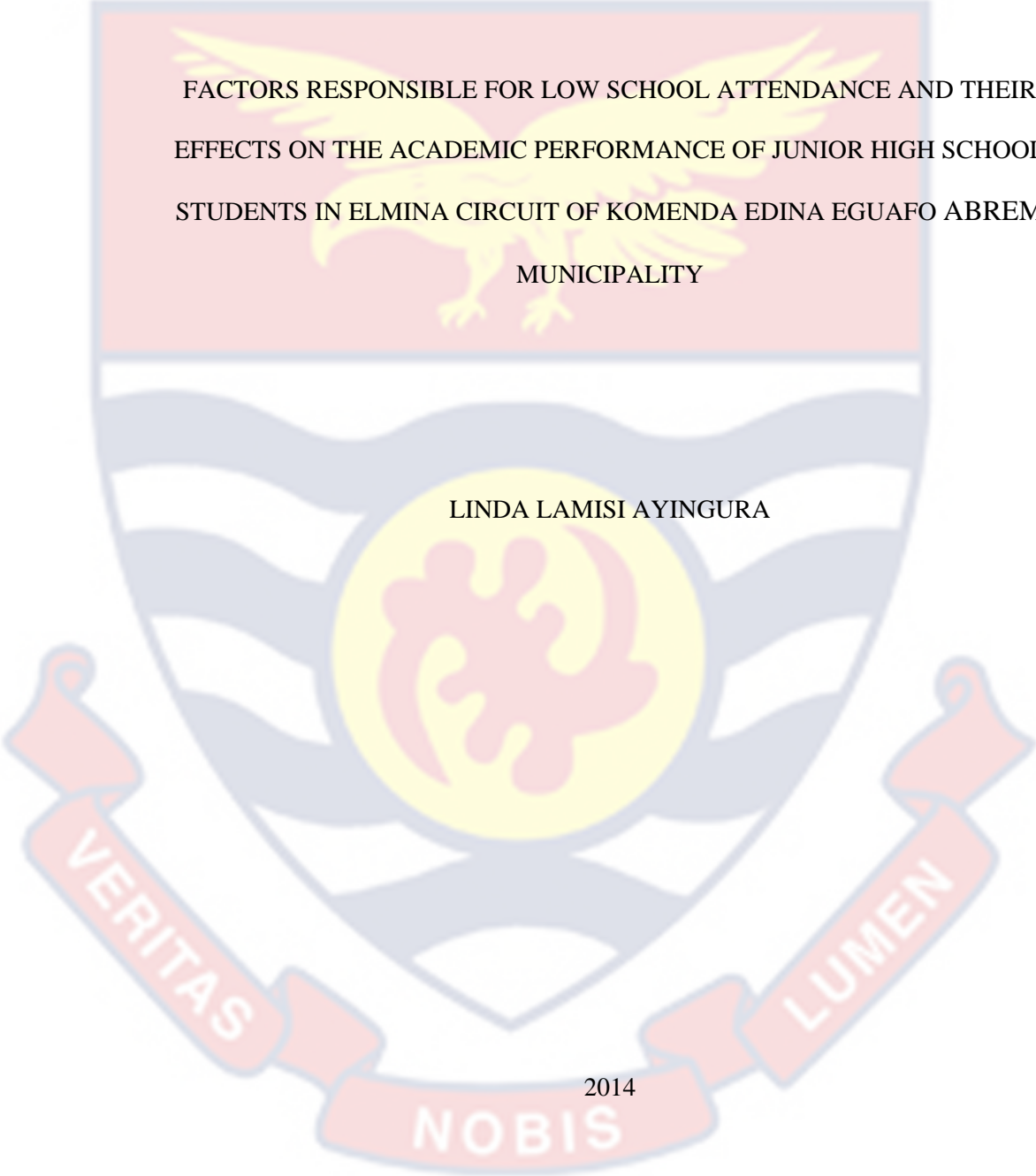UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR LOW SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THEIR

EFFECTS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENTS IN ELMINA CIRCUIT OF KOMENDA EDINA EGUAFO ABREM

MUNICIPALITY

LINDA LAMISI AYINGURA

2014
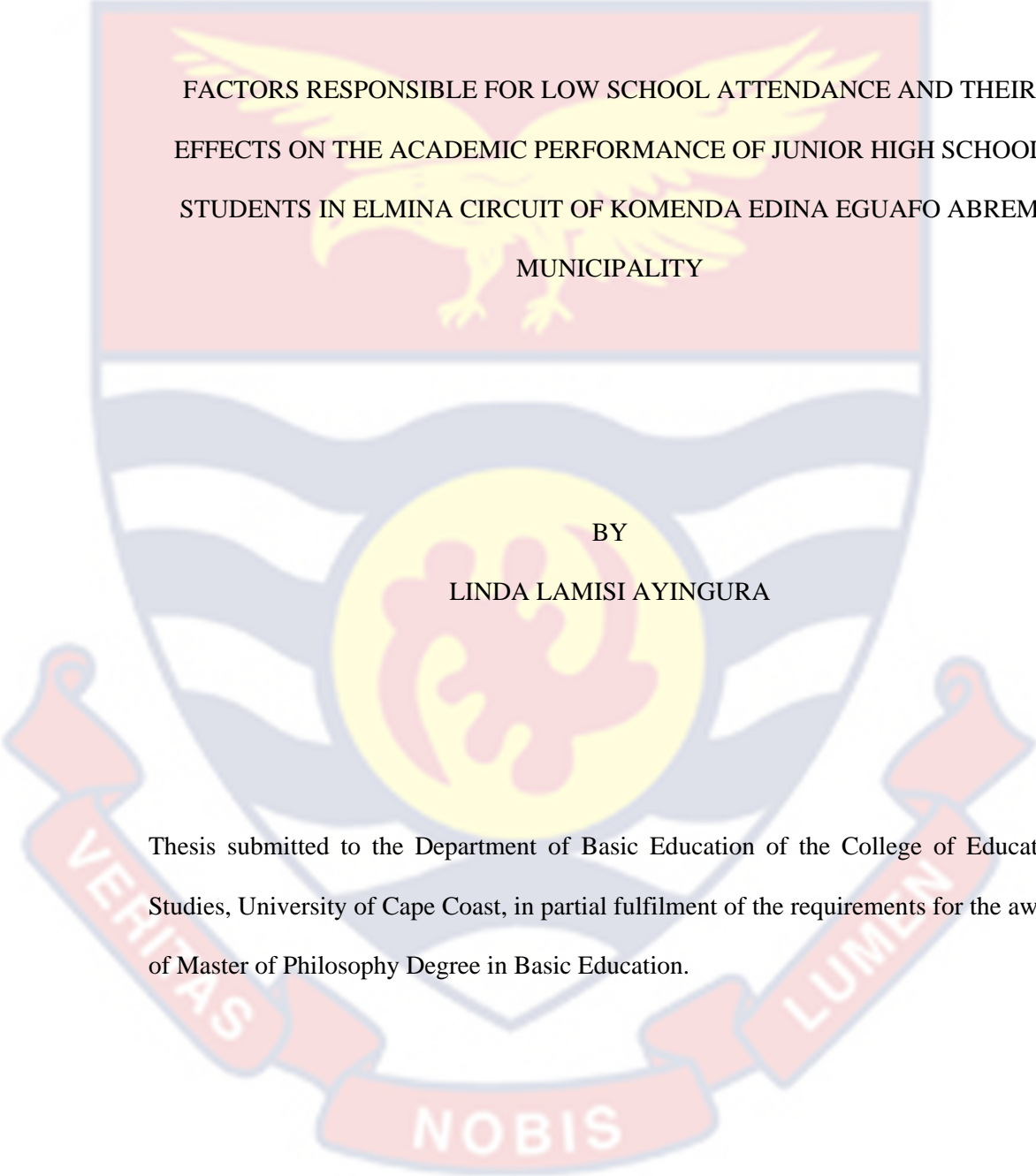
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BY

LINDA LAMISI AYINGURA

Thesis submitted to the Department of Basic Education of the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy Degree in Basic Education.

January 2014

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's Signature……………………..   Date: …………………

Name: Linda Lamisi Ayingura

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the 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. C. K Agezo

Co-supervisor's Signature ……………………..   Date………...........

Name: Mr. J.A.Yarquah

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors responsible for low school attendance among Junior High School Students and their effects on Academic Performance in Elmina Circuit in the Central Region of Ghana. The descriptive survey design was adopted to examine the factors that could lead to low school attendance. The sample comprised 39 teachers, 13 head teachers, 39 parents and 39 students. Purposive sampling was employed to select the students and their parents as well as the teachers and the head teachers. Three sets of self-structured questionnaires were used to elicit data from the teachers, head teachers and students whiles an interview guide was used to elicit information from the parents. Reliability co-efficient of 0.81, 0.79 and 0.71, were obtained for the Teachers' Questionnaire, Headteachers' Questionnaire and students Questionnaire respectively. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the data and Pearson correlation to examine the effect of low school attendance on the academic performance of the students.

The study revealed that several factors account for low school attendance among junior high school students. These are poverty on the part of parents, corporal punishment, poor facilities in schools, students' involvement in fishing and petty trading, bullying in schools and poor academic performance. It was recommended that parents should be helped to acquire some skills such as bread baking, batik production, bead making, to make them financially sound. The concept of credit unions should also be instilled in parents to enable them access funds to earn additional money for trading. Government should make a policy banning students' involvement in petty trading and fishing during school hours.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis could not have been completed without the help of some people. In fact, it would be difficult to list all of them. However, I wish to appreciate and acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. C. K Agezo a senior lecturer at Department of Basic Education, University of Cape Coast, and Mr. J.A.Yarquah also a senior lecturer of Department of Educational Foundations They spent a lot of time to guide, criticise and to correct my work. They were great supervisors with mastery of the subject matter, with patience, care and love. I am much grateful to them for helping me to complete this work.

I am also grateful to my husband, Dr. Hippolyt Dickson Angbing, a senior lecturer at the Department of Basic Education, University of Cape Coast, Mr Awal Mohammed, Madam Teni Ayine, Gabriel Agbavor and Mr Hillary Dumba for their assistance and encouragement.

My special thanks go to my children Sandra, Kennedy and Derrick Angbing.
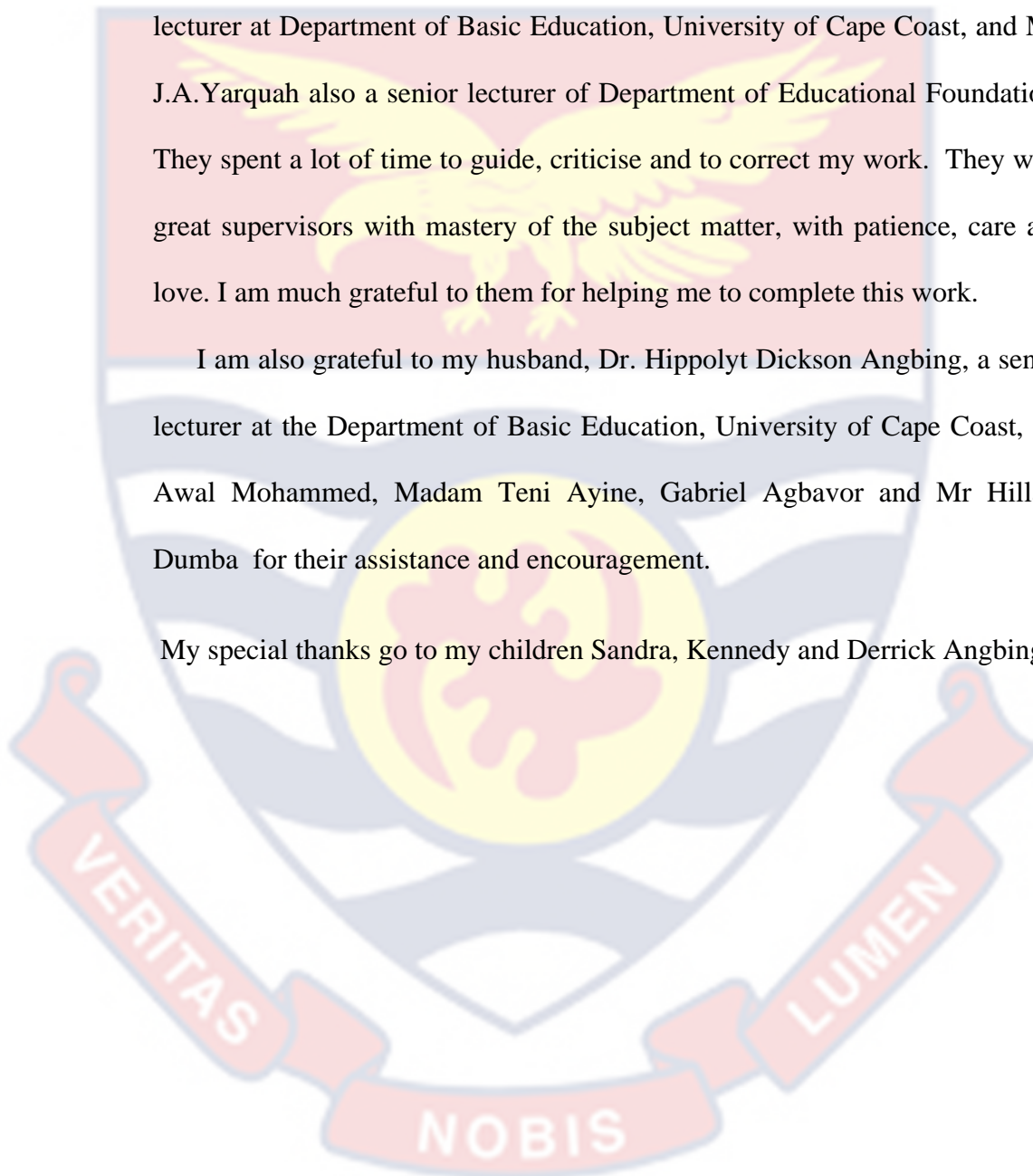
DEDICATION

To my family, especially my husband, children, brother and mother.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Education is key to developing the economic, social, scientific and political institutions of nations (Lockheed & Vespoor, 1991). In the present competitive era, one can notice that Education has become a necessity. It uplifts the person's moral, ethical and spiritual values. It also shapes one's life and career by developing the capacity latent in human nature to the expression of progress and enrichment of society. Atoyebi (2012) points out that the right to education forms the basis for individual dignity and self respect. Indeed without proper education, the advancement of any individual, whether male or female would be difficult and sluggish.

There is also the growing realisation that effective school attendance and education makes an individual to become receptive to change, increases employment opportunities, empowers, increases knowledge and helps an individual to develop his or her skill, increases life choices and awareness in areas of health, politics and others. Ghana in her 1992 constitution incorporated the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme [FCUBE]. The National Educational agenda and international development agencies have also become increasingly focused on basic education. This focus is linked to the Millennium

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Development Goals (MDGs), and in particular goal two which states that by 2015 children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Enrolment in basic education worldwide have increased and there has been a sharp drop in the number of out of school-age children worldwide (UNESCO, 2007). Basic school pupils' who are not in school is estimated to have fallen to 21% between 2002 and 2005 to only 5% between 1999 and 2002. In 2004, the median primary school survival rate was lowest (63%) in sub-Saharan Africa and most Sub Sahara Africa countries have fewer than 50% of the pupils reaching the final grade (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009).

Besides, Educational qualifications are a crucial determinant of later life-chances across Western societies (Darmody, Smyth, & McCoy, 2008). Low attendance levels can reflect more general disaffection with school and can be associated with early school leaving, academic underperformance and more restricted opportunities in terms of further education, training and the labour market (Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson, & Kirk, 2003). Moreover, the definitional boundaries between 'non attendance', 'poor attendance' and 'early school leaving' have not always been well demarcated, resulting in ambiguity in research. Ideally, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of issues surrounding school attendance in Ghanaian schools, a primary research project would be required, which would collect data specifically for the purpose of looking at attendance issues in school.

In many countries, the situation of basic education has received a lot of attention for the fact that it is a fundamental human right and a foundation for

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accelerating economic growth and reducing poverty. For the past few decades since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirmed the right of everyone to education (UNESCO, 1998), various efforts have been made on the international scene to address its access and participation-related problems. For example, at the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All, the nations of the world collectively affirmed the urgency of making quality primary education accessible to all (UNESCO, 1991). The Millennium Development Goals, particularly goal 2, makes it mandatory for every nation state to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Ghana's strategy of focusing on basic education as a powerful and necessary condition for accelerating economic growth and reducing poverty falls within the framework of the Jomtien Declaration of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015.

The aim of the Ghana Government was to ensure that by the end of the year 2015 all children of school going age must have been in school. As part of this programme, the government is assisting basic schools with capitation grant, free text books, feeding programmes and free school uniforms for some deprived schools throughout the country. The policy of education in the context of its long-term vision for the year 2015 is that every Ghanaian should have proficiency in literacy and numeracy to function effectively in the society. Efforts are still being made at the moment to make education free and compulsory, thus the 2012 budget indicates an expansion of school feeding programme, increment in the allocation of free school uniform, exercise books and the construction of more

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schools. However, for the objective of the FCUBE to be achieved there is the need for all stakeholders in the education of the child, that is, teachers, parents, communities, government, philanthropist non-governmental organisations to play their roles effectively. The greatest responsibility lies on the parents and guardians who have to ensure that they enrol their wards or children in school, ensure that they attend school regularly and punctual and the children to stay in school and learn.

The aim is for every child to have the support they need to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. Poor attendance and disruptive behaviour in basic schools have a negative impact on learning and teaching. For those children whose attendance is continuously disrupted or behaviour is particularly difficult there can be a substantial impact on subsequent life chances. Improving attendance and behaviour in school depends on addressing a range of inter-related issues at the whole-school level, in the classroom, and in relation to individual pupils. Regular attendance is also an important factor in school success. High rate of student absenteeism is believed to affect regular school attendance because teachers must accommodate non-attendees in the same class. Chronic absenteeism, truancy and academic failure may be evidence of a dysfunctional relationship between student and school, suggesting that schools need to be more student-centred and supportive of students with different needs. The child's foundation stage of education is therefore very necessary and if not firmly laid the whole structure of his or her education will be destroyed. Just as a building with a weak foundation

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is likely to collapse. It is in this direction that a child who does not attend school regularly will have his or her entire education career become destroyed.

Statement of the Problem

Despite initiatives which have been introduced by the Ghana government in the past years to improve participation in, and outcomes from education among basic school pupils, they continue to be among the most educationally disadvantaged student group in Ghana with consistently lower academic achievement and higher rates of low school attendance. The persistence of high rates of low school attendance is a major concern, as it is believed by educators that consistent school attendance is essential for educational success. Low standards of academic achievement, including low levels of achievement in Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) is almost universally attributed by teaching staff to high levels of absenteeism among basic students.

To overcome the problem of low school attendance, students' attendance is normally recorded in the attendance registers daily in schools but in many cases it is not done systematically and regularly. Though school attendance registers are marked in junior high schools of Ghana, some children still stay away from school and hence, the need for a study that will provide more reliable data on students' attendance.

In spite of huge investment being made by the government on education and Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality's mission to provide quality education for all children of school going age in the municipality, students' attendance to school in Elmina circuit continues to fall with a large number of

children absenting themselves from school. The rate at which one also sees children roaming about during school hours coupled with low school attendance of pupils in Elmina circuit is what baffles me. For instance my visit to some junior high schools in the Elmina circuit to find out low school attendance among junior high school students revealed that the problem actually exists. For instance at Sherrif Islamic .junior high school average school attendance was 43 percent in 2009/2010. At Bantuma Akyinim M/A junior high school average school attendance was 49 percent in 2009/2010 while at Elmina Catholic Boys junior high school average school attendance was 63 percent. It is in the light of this that I want to research into the factors responsible for low school attendance and their effects on the academic performance of junior high school students in Elmina circuit of the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem municipality.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at investigating the factors responsible for low school attendance and their effects on the academic performance of students in junior high schools in Elmina circuit. Specifically, the study was to examine:

1. Home related factors responsible for absence from school among junior high school students in Elmina Circuit.

2. School related factors responsible for absence from school among junior high school students in Elmina Circuit.

3. Peer /child related factors responsible for absence from school among junior high school students in Elmina Circuit.

4. The effect of low school attendance on the academic performance of junior high school students in Elmina Circuit.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What home related factors are responsible for low school attendance of junior high school students in Elmina circuit?

2. What school related factors are responsible for low school attendance of junior high school students in Elmina circuit?

3. What peer/child related factors are responsible for low school attendance of junior high schools in Elmina circuit?

4. How does low school attendance affect the academic performance of junior high school students in the Elmina circuit?

5. What measures are in place to check low school attendance of students in the Elmina circuit?

Significance of the Study

Parents often blame teachers for students' irregular attendance at classes and vice versa. One therefore wonders who actually is responsible for this problem. The findings of this study would help parents to be aware of the causes of low school attendance and how to reduce the cases of students who are not regular in school.

Findings of this study will also help teachers, educational authorities, policy makers and those connected with the education and training of the child to affect the desired level of behavioural change by giving the right education and training

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to the child. The findings of the study would enable parents and teachers to minimise the incidence of truancy among junior high school students in the Elmina circuit.

Delimitation of the Study

The present study is delimited to low school attendance and its effect on the academic performance of junior high school students. The study is also delimited to junior high schools in Elmina circuit in Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem municipality

Limitations of the Study

In conducting a study of this nature, I encountered certain factors that might affect the validity of the results of the study. Though I employ multiple instruments such as questionnaire, interview guide, and school records such as class attendance registers and ends of term examination scores of the students with the lowest school attendance for 2012/2013 academic year. Moreover, some of the items in the questionnaire were self-rating and the respondents would not have provided the needed answers. This could affect the validity of the results of the study.

Also due to limited time and the large number of students in junior high schools in Ghana and particularly in Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem municipality, I limited the study to the Elmina circuit. As a result, the findings of this study may not be generalised to the entire municipality.

Organisation of the Rest of the Study

The study covered five chapters. The second chapter is the review of

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related literature. This was divided into home related factors, school related factors and peer/ child related factors responsible for low school attendance among junior high school students, the effect of low school attendance on the academic performance of basic school pupils and measures to minimise low school attendance among pupils.

Chapter three described the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, instruments, pilot testing of instrument and data collection procedure, as well as data analysis. Chapter four presented the results and discussion. The chapter consisted of the discussion of the results as well as the major findings that emerged with regard to the research questions. Finally, chapter five focused on the summary, conclusions and recommendations. Suggested areas for further research are also captured in this chapter.
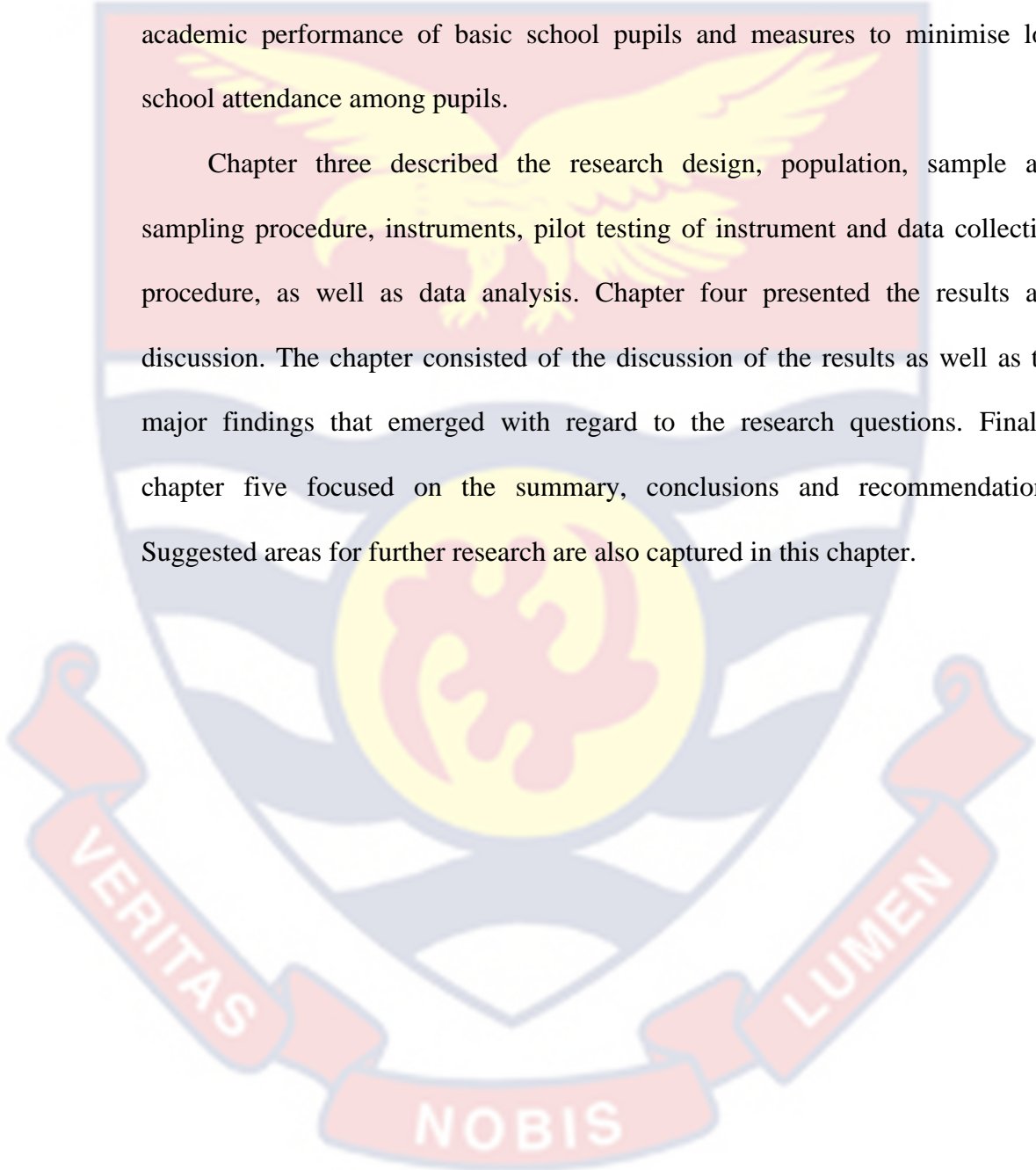
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter deals with the review of the early findings of other researchers that are relevant to the issue under investigation. The review of related literature covered the following headings. Meaning of school, meaning of attendance, low school attendance, types of low school attendance, home and school factors responsible for low school attendance, the effect of low school attendance on the academic performance of students and suggestions by various writers as solutions to low school attendance among students. This allowed comparison to be made between the findings that have emerged from this study and the earlier findings from previous studies.

Meaning of School

According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2005) a School is a place where children go to be educated. Agyeman (1993) says, the school is a unit of interacting personalities who are bound together in an organised relationship to each other for the purpose of giving and receiving instructions based on specific curricula. He believes that school is not like the mob or the crowd which meets by accidents and performs a certain activity. According to him the school is a social institution within which a number of purposes are served and a number of social goals are achieved. Therefore the school used so broadly includes the basic

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schools, secondary and tertiary schools. In short we talk of a school wherever and whenever educators and educands that are teachers and learners meet for the purpose of giving and receiving knowledge based on formally laid down rules and regulations. To broaden the concept of school he further asserts that the school can either be under a tree, in a hut or in modern concrete buildings, While the school is defined here to be found in all societies, modern schools, as we find them today in Africa, are a legacy of the western world which was passed on to Africa through colonial influence.

Attendance

Attendance means being present at a place, for example at school. (Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary 2005). Attendance rate in schools tell the average percentage of students attending school each day in the given year, Attendance means the registration, daily presence and retention of children in school until they complete their education at that level. The main measure of attendance is the proportion of students achieving a school attendance rate of 95% or higher, which equates to students missing less than 2-3 days per school term. Other attendance outcomes are number of late, sick or medical days, justified absences (e.g. bereavement leave), and unjustified absences (truancy). Attendance data are recorded by schools in the usual way and extracted for data collection at the end of each school term.

Meaning of School Attendance

The compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), introduced by the government of Ghana in 1992, was part of the education policy introduced in the

country with the aim to ensuring that universal basic education school enrolment is attained and also to make sure illiteracy is lessened, if not totally eradicated. From this it is deductively clear that it is an offence for an individual to refuse to attend school provided the individual has attained the legal school age. However it has been found out that school attendance has been affected by social, economic and cultural issues. The responsibility of parents is to send their children to school and also encourage them to put up their best especially at the initial stages of schooling since the child, at that stage, does not have any intrinsic motivation.

Some pupils appear to be caught in a cycle of poor attendance, which affects their attainment and attitude to school and leads on to subsequent authorised absence (Malcolm, Thorpe & Lowden, 1996). Worryingly, there is evidence that the age of the onset of truancy and non-attendance is becoming increasingly younger. Malcolm, et al (2003) found that 27 per cent of primary pupils compared with 16 per cent of secondary schools started missing school at some point. Thus researchers are increasingly stressing that early intervention strategies are essential to combat truancy and other forms of non-attendance (Learmouth, 1995; Easen, Clark, & Wootten. 1997). Equally of concern is the finding that more pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 are beginning to miss school (OfStEd, 2004a), possibly because of the adverse effects of the National Curriculum. Therefore, how the revised 14-19 curriculum and increasing provision for after-school, out-of-school, pre-school and alternative curriculum strategies will impact upon attendance will be of considerable interest to policy makers and teachers

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alike. Certainly, these initiatives should be only of benefit to some less able and disaffected pupils.

Low School Attendance

The emphasis that school districts place on regular school attendance is a reflection of the importance our nation places on education, as well as a recognition that being in school on a daily basis is necessary if education is to effectively prepare a child for adulthood. Low attendance to school which is often stepping stone to dropping out of school before graduation has consequences for children. Low school attendance has also engaged the attention of many researchers in recent past. This is as a result of its disastrous consequences in the school set up. In fact it is not easy to obtain exact figures on low school attendance but those figures which are available from schools and education offices show that school absences spreads over a lot of pupils, with each child spending an average of nearly one fourth a day from school hours.

A study using data from a large national survey of drug use found that about 11 percent eighth grade students and about 15 percent of tenth grade students reported having been truant at least once in the previous four week Henry and Huizinga (2007). As a result of the harm it causes in the development of the child in his educational pursuit, low school attendance has given birth to many different concepts in the eyes of different researchers. Truancy, school refusal, school phobia, child delinquencies, parental withdrawal and absenteeism are all terms researchers use when they are referring to low school attendance.

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Thus we see low school attendance as a canker and we must try to find an antidote to it.

It is generally agreed that poor school attendance is hard to define as this behaviour is caused by multiple, often interrelated, factors. There is also no national accepted definition for it. However, it is argued that, without a clear understanding of the nature of low/ poor attendance, it will be difficult to develop comprehensive approaches to address the problem. The extent of absence from school can vary considerably. It can range from the occasional skipping of single lessons to absences that may last for several weeks (Atkinson, Halsey, Wilkin & Kinder, 2000). According to Atkinson et al if such prolonged absence is considered by the school to be 'unacceptable' and 'unjustified', it is referred to as 'truancy'.

Office for Standards in Education {OfStEd}, (2001) report also indicates that truancy should not be synonymous with unauthorised absence, as some authorised absences can result from the school's refusal to authorise excessive absences for holidays taken during term time without the prior consent of the school. Due to these definitional problems, most authors using the term 'truancy' provide situation-specific definitions, as the generic terms often means different things to different people. Tyerman (1968) shares the view that truancy refers to the absence on a child's own initiative. Also more boys than girls' truanted. This, too, may be changing. Malcolm et al. (2003) found that a higher percentage of girls than boys now truant, although there were some variations among pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Interestingly, however, absentees and truants

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do not form a homogeneous group (Malcolm, Thorpe, & Lowden, 1996, Easen Clark, & Wootten. (1997). Although the work of individual schools can make a difference, there appears to be no single prescriptive way to reduce truancy (Hallam, 1996).

In view of the diversity of terms used in expressing this phenomenon, it is necessary to show the context in which the terms are being used and their meaning. Therefore truancy and absenteeism will be used interchangeably in this write up. Truancy is the practice of staying away from school without permission. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005). According to the same dictionary Absenteeism means the fact of being frequently away from work or school especially without good reasons. School attendance, to conclude, could be defined differently depending on the society and could also be affected by many varied factors such as social, economic, personal and psychological factors. Coming to school and leaving when school has not closed officially is an act of truancy. School children usually come to school and leave to the house or market places when school is still in session. This they do without the knowledge of the teachers. Late comers are pupils who arrive at school after the schedule time while the teacher has started teaching. They are said to have come to school late. Absenteeism on the part of pupils has been described as the act of one not coming to school at all with or without permission. Clyne (1966) sees absenteeism from the medial point of view that physicians think school refusal is reaction behaviour due to underlying physical illness. Absenteeism is at times equated with school phobia which means a fear to attend school. According to Tyerman (1968) school

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phobia is a compulsive fear that is unreasonably or greatly exaggerated. For example during the First World War some mothers took their children into the ground floor to the nearest school which was used as an air- raid shelter. Their mothers had been afraid and their children had come to associate the building with fear. Absentee is a person who is absent. It therefore means that to keep one away from school means the person is absent therefore his/her attendance to school will be poor.

However, most schools have high attendance rates. If your school's attendance rate is below the state average, the school may face challenges in getting students to come to school regularly. There is also clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement. The Government has already taken action to improve school attendance. Last year, the Government lowered the threshold at which children are defined as persistently absent to 15 per cent or more of school time, so that schools could step in to tackle absence sooner before the problem really takes hold. Previously, children who missed 20 per cent of school were considered persistent absentees. Records and experiences have shown that the rate of increase in the number of school-age children who are not attending primary school has reached an alarming level. This phenomenon has persisted despite various efforts of government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to propagate education and school attendance. Questions need to be asked concerning this backward condition of the society. Inquiries need to be made into the critical factors that inhibit primary school attendance if the nation wants to achieve the present target of education

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for all in 2015. In this regard, could poverty, high cost of schooling, societal orientation toward materialism, employment uncertainty, socio-cultural values and beliefs, and large family size be significant constraints to primary school attendance in Ghana?

Types of Low School Attendance

There are various types of low school attendance. They include specific lesson absence, post-registration absence, parentally condoned absence, psychological absence, school refusal and school phobia. This is where the 'problem' begins. For some, specific lesson absence, post- registration absence and parentally condoned absence are not truancy. For others they are, and are often retiled specific lesson truancy, post-registration truancy and parentally condoned truancy. For some, 'absent without good reason' can be equated with truancy. For others, having a reason for the absence for example, being a parentally condoned absentee means by definition that this form of behaviour is not truancy (Reid, 1999).

In a study of absence from school Malcolm et al. (2003) use three different terms to describe pupils' non-attendance. For them, 'truancy' was defined as 'absences which pupils themselves indicated would be unacceptable to teachers'. 'Unacceptable absences' were defined as 'absences which were unacceptable to teachers and local education authorities (LEAs) but not recognised as such by pupils'. Finally, 'parentally condoned absences' were the results of parents or careers keeping pupils away.

In addition to the terms 'unauthorised absence' and 'truancy'. Beck (2012) also differentiated between an 'unauthorised' and 'authorised' or 'parentally condoned' absence. This form of absence may cover a variety of reasons, such as taking holidays or keeping a child from school to look after other family members and may not be acceptable in educational terms as serious enough reasons for missing school. The term 'unauthorised absence' often covers multiple forms of absence from school. Hence, greater clarity is needed on the interpretation of absence in order to address the issue in a constructive way.

Reid (2005) suggests there is no single category of parent whose children miss school. His pioneering study puts forward some preliminary evidence which found that five different types of parents of truants and absentees exist. These were parents who depict the symptoms of being anti-education, laissez-faire, frustrated, desperate or adjusting. For example, frustrated parents are those who, despite their best endeavours, including appeals to schools, education welfare officers and/or other caring professionals, are unable to ensure their child attends school regularly. In some cases the pupils abscond even when the parent/s escort them daily to the school gates.

Reid (2012) in his article truancy and schools declared that broadly, there are two groups of truants thus the intentional truants, who have ready access to school, but nevertheless choose to play truant; and the unintentional truants, who find it difficult to access school, particularly in rural and remote areas. The former group is well endowed with all schooling facilities and their families do not need a helping hand financially. The opposite is true for the latter. They are

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the children of the urban and rural poor who may have to be absent from school to help their families. Also, in some instances, the nearest school is too far for them without proper transport. For the unintentional truants, collaboration with other ministries and bodies is required to improve the amenities and living standards of the families concerned. For the intentional truants, the schools and Education Ministry can do much to reduce and eliminate the problem. I tend to believe that most primary school truants fall in the unintentional group, while the secondary school truants are mainly intentional truancy. Seeley (2006) also grouped truancy into various categories reflecting many states' policies. He says absent without an excuse by the parent/guardian or if the student leaves school or a class without permission of the teacher or administrator in charge, it will be considered an unexcused absence and the student shall be considered truant. His second type of truancy is known as habitual truancy meaning specific number of consecutive unexcused absences from school or a total number of unexcused absences over a semester or school year. He made it clear that the third category known as' chronic truant' refers to students who have been disciplined according to procedure after meeting the criteria for habitual truancy, but continue to accumulate unlawful absences despite court or school mandate.

Factors Responsible for Low School Attendance

Low attendance to school by pupils is common to most educational systems and is caused by several factors. Eastman, Cooney, O'Connor and Small (2007). said the reasons students fail to attend school are multifaceted and complex. Causes can occur at the individual, family, school and community levels. For

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example, students may skip school because of school phobia, learning disabilities, or difficulty getting along with other students or teachers. Families may have chaotic living situations or parents may have poor parenting skills that affect their ability to monitor and encourage their child's school attendance.

Home Factors Responsible for Low School Attendance

There are several home factors that are identified to be responsible for low school attendance. Some of these factors are dealt with one after the other.

Poverty

Poverty means that the per-capita income of the household is low and this affects their propensity for education (Iyamu & Obiunu, 2006). Poor families consider children to be an economic asset and often make use of their labour to generate an income. Children are engaged in collecting and selling fuel wood or working as porters and in other daily-wage activities, so they frequently miss school. These results in poor learning achievements and children may eventually drop out of school. Children mental health treatment research and teaching centre (2011) stated that poverty, even in intact families is a factor that has implication for truancy. Children who live in poverty often have emotional issues related to security, self esteem and anxiety as well as more basic concerns such as hunger, appropriate clothing and general deprivation. As well parents caught in poverty are significantly less likely to value education than their middle class counterparts and therefore may not see truancy as a serious risk factor. And again an adolescent's earnings from a part time job could be of such importance to the family that the parents might even be encouraging the students' truancy.

Sperling and Rekha, (2005) also said many families, especially those who are poor, cannot afford the cost of school fees, transportation, materials, or clothing for their children to attend school. He added lack of or low level of formal education is a cause of poverty. For a wide variety of reasons, under-educated parents, particularly women, are less able to see to it that that their children get the education they need. According to Agyeman (1983), it is true to say that poverty negatively affects the chances of the success of a child in school. For a child who is constantly hungry will find it difficult in giving full attention to a lesson in the classroom. Again if a child observes that his or her older siblings are either unemployed or in poorly paid jobs he is likely to develop negative attitude towards schooling. Agyeman further states that middle upper socio economic families provide a congenial learning background and atmosphere for their children by providing them with books, toys writing materials and other educational facilities. Many parents seem not to know the importance of being regular in school. For a wide variety of reasons, under educated parents; are less capable to see to it that their children get the education they need. This contributes to factors that help perpetuate the cycle of poverty, such as child labour, low wages, and job insecurity. It is clear, for example, that poverty is a major cause of under-education, which makes for a weaker work force. King and Hill (1992) say many families, especially those who are poor, cannot afford the cost of school fees, transportation, materials, or clothing for their children to attend school. Thus children perform other responsibilities in the home such as

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caring for younger siblings, house work, farming or trade which prevent them from attending school regularly.

A study from the Northern Ireland (Hogan, 2007), points in particular to boys as young as nine or ten becoming very disenchanted from school and starting disengaged. This evidence points towards the interaction of educational disadvantage faced by children growing up in poverty, the difficulty faced by teachers in disadvantaged schools and differences in the way boys and girls are socialised leading to boys been particularly failed by the education system. The study found that children are highly aware of their social positions and the limitations it placed on them from an early age.

Marshal (1984) further states that the children of poor parents often have to do heavy chores in the house or on the farm or even go out trading before coming to school in the morning and returning in the afternoon. The family may not be able to afford uniforms or even adequate food at night, there may be no suitable place for him or her to do his home work and insufficient light for him to work. A child from such a family will definitely skip home work and will be afraid to go to school because he is afraid that his teachers will cane him. Also King and Hill (1992), said under education is a cause of poverty. For a wide variety of reasons, under-educated parents, particularly women, are less able to see to it that that their children get the education they need. Besides Chauhan (1978), said recreational facilities play a very important role in the learning and education of the child. The saying goes that 'all work and no play makes jack a dull boy'. Modern facilities like television games, computer games, brick games, jig saw

puzzles and the like all help to educate the child in a very special way. A home without recreational facilities makes the child very bored.

The UK has one of the steepest socio-economic 'gradients 'in education among similar countries (OECD, 2001). A primary cause of child poverty is a lack of opportunities among parents with low skills and low qualifications. Such parents are less likely to work, and if they do work they are more likely to have low earnings. The task of balancing the economic demands of raising a family and the need to find time to devote to children is much harder for people in low-paid jobs with limited power to negotiate working arrangements. Where parents have to make a choice between low income and long hours, it is difficult to give children good life chances. Research has shown that someone who has grown up in poverty is disadvantaged well into adulthood. This is to a large extent because people from disadvantaged homes are less likely to get good educational qualifications. There is also a separate correlation between poverty and success in mid-life. Controlling for qualifications, people in their 30s who experienced financial hardship when growing up are less likely to be doing well in the labour market (Blanden & Gibbons, 2006) thus, the relationship between poverty and low achievement at school is part of a wider cycle in which family disadvantage is passed on from one generation to the next. Closing the opportunity gap in education is an important part of combating long-term causes of disadvantage. Yet it cannot be seen in isolation from other features of disadvantage. Some of these need to be brought into an analysis of why it is that children in poverty have

worse chances at school. It is clear, for example, that poverty is a major cause of low school attendance which leads to poor performance.

Low Parental Value on Education.

The role of parents is to look out for the well-being of their own children. Many economically and educationally disadvantaged parents, however, have had less positive experiences with schools either in their own or their children's education. When parents do not appear to be encouraging their children's school attendance, it may be that they perceive the school to be unsafe or ineffective. These perceptions can create a conflict with parents' desire (and obligation) to protect their children's physical and psychological safety and promote their welfare. By high school, most parents have little direct control over whether or not their children regularly attend class or school, yet the law holds parents fully responsible regardless of their child's age. Dave (1963) reports that the attitude of parents exhibited towards education and the consequential degree of encouragement they offer their children in school activities are in part a reflection of the value they place on education and an indication of their own perception of the relevance of educational achievement to their own life purposes and to their aspirations for their children.

Iyamu and Obiunnu (2006) also found that the growing apathy to schooling among parents and children in Nigeria is to some extent related to the changing value system in the society. According to them, people now worship money and wealth in Nigeria and rarely have regard and respect for education and educated people. There is also the misconception that one gets rich quicker without going

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to school and that those who go to school rarely get rich. Many parents and youths have been misled by such misconceptions resulting in growing number of children who do not attend school. The position held by these parents appears to be gaining credence and popularity considering the obvious decline in the economic returns to schooling in Nigeria as a result of underemployment and unemployment.

Another significant finding in this study is the continued influence of socio-cultural values and beliefs on the education process. According to the finding, parents are hesitant to send their female children to school because of their early marriage and the fear that a woman is meant to get married and look after the home and not to go to school and get corrupt. Similarly, they still hold on to the practice that a female child has to be given out in marriage as early as possible (between 8 and 12 years) so that the future husband would contribute to their feeding and upkeep. They also believe that early marriage prevents the young girls from having sexual experience with other men too early in life. More importantly, it avails the girls' parents the benefit of the bride prices and opportunity of having grandchildren early (Isah, 2000). The need to have male children join in the farm work was found to be one of the important reasons for not attending school.

Werner (1981) observed that parents who are well educated generally value education and expect their children to become well educated also. In contrast, semi educated or illiterate has less interest let alone value the importance of education. This adversely affects their children and some become truants in

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school. The parents usually show less interest in their children's progress at school, neither do they meet, collaborate with their teachers. Consequently the children lose interest in school because they have negative perception that nobody is interested in what they do at school. They end up skipping school and at worse drop out of school.

Acording to Coleman (1998), the socio-economic status of parents has been found to have influence on the educational attainment of their children, but he implies that even though the results of such foundlings are true, the conclusion is too simplistic. He contends that social capital is a more dominant factor in influencing educational attainment. He explains social capital as the quality of social interaction a focal student derives from parents, relatives and community members. It is also the quality of educational information and reinforcement received from the home and neighbourhood. Furthermore, it is the amount of interest and support parents invest in their children's education. Therefore, for children to be able to attain high levels in education their parents should have quality social interaction with them. Parents can do this by helping their children to do their home work, reading books and news papers to them, paying regular visits to their schools to find out about their progress, discussion their problems they encounter in school with them and among others. Such social interactions enhance children interest in school.

If parents are positively inclined towards the education of their wards, they will show interest in their children's education and help them to attend school regularly as far as education is concern, On the other hand, if parents themselves

are not so keen on education, they will not show any interest in their children's education let alone provide for their needs or encourage them to be in school always. Their orientation towards education however, will depend largely on their own academic achievement or educational background. The higher their own level of education the greater their interest in their children education will be and vice versa. If a family has a positive attitude towards education every effort will be made to provide the children the material they will need in their education. Children who come from families that have positive attitude towards education usually attend school regularly since their parents ensure they go to school every day.

Parents Occupation

Occupational backgrounds of parents play an important role in a child's progress in education. Cox and McCubbins (2005) indicate that, many children grow up in homes of abundance of fiscal and material resources. Parents involvement in the educational process differs by social class as a great deal of research has focused on the 'cultural capital' that the child brings to school from his family life. .Poverty takes a toll on students' school performance. Poor children are twice as likely as their more affluent counterparts to repeat a grade, to be suspended, expelled, or drop out of school or to be place in special education classes. Family composition and economic circumstances are often intertwined. More than half of the poor families in Ghana are headed by unmarried or divorced mothers who must balance employment issues. These women are often trapped in low-wage jobs with child care and parenting

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responsibilities. Of late more than one out of four children lived with only one parent. Women in particular have no choice but to work, opening a shop if they have the capital or working in sweat shop if they did not. It is very difficult for a single parent to work and raise children, and children of most single parents are left at orphanages or simply abandoned to the streets and are denied the privileges of going to school, even if they are enrolled do not attend school regularly. In sum, children from more economically affluent home circumstances have a leg up in many areas of life, including education. Johnson and Duffett (2003) reported that two thirds of teachers surveyed believed that their students would perform better in school if their parents were more involved in their child's education, while 72 percent of parents say children of uninvolved parents sometimes 'fall through the cracks' in school.

In Grand duchy of Baden; now part of the federal republic of Germany, children were traditionally employed for herding live stock, collecting wood in the forest and doing other chores that supplemented the family income. Compulsory school attendance introduced at the turn of the century therefore meant a restriction in the productive capacity of many rural families. Also in cases where the family income was gained by doing work for capitalist entrepreneurs much of the work was usually the children's task. Thus the sources of income were cut off if children were required to be in school (Werner, 1981). Ottaway (1967) also supported the view that one way in which the family can impinge in the education of the child is through environment in which he is associated. He pointed out that some of the correlates of a poor environment may

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be found even in well-to-do families, but life conditions of those generally poor, who do unskilled manual jobs are marked by a pattern of disadvantages.. Other factors remaining the same, children of such families are more likely than others to become school drop-outs.

Access to School/Long Distance to School

Redmond (2008) asserts that many educators and some political leaders have increasingly viewed mere access to a school and its offerings as an inadequate solution to the problem of educational inequality. Stromguist (2001) also said that the low school participation rates are primarily a function of family or work obligation that render the individual unable to take advantage of offerings, but they are also due to lack of school facilities. In rural areas where there are a few classrooms, a study focusing on rural schools in Peru found that 90 percent of these schools operated in single rooms and that 3 percent had only one teacher which suggests that a high number of basic schools are incomplete. Also some children in the rural areas passed through dangerous means to get to schools. For instance in a recent survey in 2007, 5 percent of Wisconsin students reported missing school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school, 8 percent reported being threatened or injured with a weapon and 12 percent had been in a physical fight on school property. Once again, Dominic reported in Daily Graphic of September 14 (2012) that over two hundred and seventy five pupils from the Weija cluster of schools in the Greater Accra Region have dropped out of school because of lack of foot bridge over the Weija Lake. In addition, 1200 pupils who lived at Ayigbe Town, SCC, Old Barrier, Bortianor

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and Broadcasting, all communities on one side of the Wairau Dam put their lives in danger by scaling the walls of the dam daily to get to school. Those who cannot climb the walls of the dam go through the wire fence gate to cross over the bridge to their respective schools. In addition, the schools are affected by persistent absenteeism and truancy because the pupils cannot afford the transportation to and from school. In urban areas, public schools sometimes cannot meet the demand. Thus, it is a common phenomenon of seeing parents standing in long queues for long hours to ensure their children are enrolled. They also pass through long processes like buying of admission forms, and waiting for their children to write entrance examination before being admitted in the schools. This is not the end as one can see parents day in and day out coming in their numbers just to drop their children in schools. (Like the University of Cape Coast basic schools and Flowers Gay basic schools in Cape coast). Life in rural schools, for both teachers and students, tends to be harsh. A large number of these schools have no water, electricity or sanitation facilities.

Family Structure

Family structure refers to (two parents) families and non-intact (single parent) families. Several studies conducted on family structure and educational attainment showed that there is a relationship between the two variables. Astone and Mclanahan (1991) studied the relationship between the two variables and found that parental involvement has positive effects on children's school achievement. For children from non intact families report lower educational expectations as a result of less monitoring of school work and less overall

supervision of social activities by parents than children from intact-families. An exception is the fact that children in single families spend significantly more time talking to their parents than children in two-parent families. The researchers also found that the differences in parenting practices between intact and non-intact families could also account for the higher rate of school dropout among children from non-intact families. This has been attributed to the economic position of single- parenting families.

Researchers have also revealed that single-parenthood is not caused by a single factor. It occurs by way of divorce, death, separation and unplanned birth in the light of premarital sex. Weiss (1997) points out that a basic problem is the inadequacy of resources available to single parents and the consequent overload: responsibility, task and emotional imbalance. In fact the disadvantages of single-parent households are accounted for by economic disadvantage. Weiss added that one parent must do the work of two parents. Researchers tend to agree with Weiss in the sense that where a parent is single handily caring for children and not gainfully employed he/she would have to engage in multiple jobs like petty trading, baby sitting and helping people with their farms work in order to earn a living for the upkeep of their children. Such parents who may have to work the whole day would not have time to check whether his or her children have done their home work or not nor have time to check whether their children attend school regularly or not. This may virtually lead children to become truants in school.

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It must be said that single mothers intentionally or unintentionally vent their frustration, trauma, emotional and psychological imbalance on their children and this directly or indirectly has full impact on the attendance of pupils to school. In the same vein, single fathers torn between their work and the house tend to focus more on the job than establishing personal contact with the children. The children having assumed control of their own business become vulnerable to all problems which inadvertently affect their school attendance.   Furthermore, Webb and Vulliami (2004) reported that among the poor attendees participating in their study approximately three quarters did not live with their two parents.   Children who do not live with both parents have problems with their academic performance and lack of financial support can lead the child to engage in various acts such as stealing, absenteeism from school and other forms of social vices. The child will not be motivated enough to study leading to poor academic performance and subsequent withdrawal from school.

School Factors Responsible for Low School Attendance

The school is another environment which has a great influence on the child's development. Also the most immediate place where the child receives formal education apart from the home is school. It should be noted however that children from varied social, ethnic, cultural, religious and psychological backgrounds converge to form a school. Every school also has its norm and ethics that pupils must conform to. There is therefore the higher probability that, there shall be inter and intra cultural, social and religious incompatibility and if a child finds the condition very odd, he /she may choose to stay away from school

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In one survey, students cited boredom and loss of interest in school, irrelevant courses, suspensions and bad relationships with teachers as the major factors in their decision to skip school. On the other hand, most of the school staff believed truancy to be related primarily to students' problems with family and Peers. (Eric, 1992). Reid (1985) also cited school based factors such as bullying, the curriculum and poor teaching were clear causes of children irregularities in school. However, all individual cases contained aspects of social, psychological and institutional features to a greater or lesser extent. As such each case was unique and often interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in nature. Baker, Sigmon, and Nugent (2001) identify school factors that contribute to low school attendance to be climate issues such as school size and attitudes of teachers, other students and administrators and inflexibility in meaning the diverse cultural and learning styles of the students. Schools often have inconsistent procedures in place for dealing with chronic absenteeism and may not have meaningful consequences available for truant youth. Within the school setting, poor management: the ease at which some pupils could slip away from school unnoticed, poor relations with teachers and peers and the perceive irrelevance of some aspect of the school curriculum causes low attendance to school. Quaynor and Azeez (2000) also identified some common features among national educational systems on the continent, these included poor funding, ineffective management, inconsistent policies, differentiation, low school attendance, increasing dropout rate, poor and unattractive school conditions, poorly trained, poorly equipped and poorly motivated teachers, inadequate infrastructures,

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ineffective teaching and learning. They concluded that these phenomena combined to make schooling meaningless, ineffective and unattractive. These, according to them have reduced the potency of education to transform the societies. They have also made it difficult for the schools to attract and retain students. Malcolm et al. (2003) concluded that in the main, parents believed that school-related factors were the cause of pupils' poor attendance. A detailed literature on some of these school related factors which contribute to pupils irregularities in school are discussed below.

Poor Pupil -Teacher Relationship

Teachers have also been cited in some studies as bearing some responsibility for why some children stop schooling. Student absences were the result of academic weakness, followed by personal psychological problems and employment outside school (Beck, 2012). He concluded that most students' absences were the results of academic weakness, followed by personal psychological problems and employment outside school.

Umme (2007) said parents are of the opinion that schools are not particularly friendly towards very poor children especially if they do not have proper clothes, are not clean, not familiar with the need and importance of sending the child to school. He added parents have expressed that some teachers are very strict in dealing with their wards. In the same vein a study in the Irish context identified an impact of positive and negative interaction with teachers on students' perception of school and on attendance. Kinder, Harland, Wilkin and Wakefield (1995) explored the relationship between attendance and school

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factors and found that as school size increase so did the absence rate. In addition it concluded that schools with lower teacher- student ratios had lower absence rate.

Irrelevant Curriculum/Uninteresting Curriculum

Many pupils are turned off school by an irrelevant curriculum and problems catching up with work if they fall behind OfStEd, (2007). It is claimed there is a direct link between the overall standard of teaching and the number of lessons missed. OfStEd (2007) also says reasons given by pupils for skipping classes include finding some lessons boring, difficulties getting on with teachers, problems catching up after falling behind and the relevance of the curriculum. The watchdog looked at 471 schools across England which was assessed as having good lessons and found 67 percent had good or outstanding attendance records, 436 schools with merely satisfactory teaching standards, that figure dropped to 30 percent. The findings follow criticism by academics that many pupils are being turned off education at a younger age by mechanical lessons that place too much emphasis on testing.

Also it is worthy to note that students vary in their attitude to education. Some are positive oriented towards education, seeing it either as a means to achieving some of their life-long goals. Others have a negative orientation. There are some who perceive education as a series of unpleasant, failing experience. Such negative attitudes invariably affect the attendance of pupils to school. students who score good greats in their school work and examinations develop interest in education. In contrast students who score bad grades develop bad

feeling and attitudes that they do not belong to the education field because it will not enable them to secure a good future. To such students also, education cannot be a stepping stone for them for vocational success. These students are likely to be absenting themselves from school frequently. Nestrogel (1995) suggest that teachers' lack of adequate initial training translate into their poor teaching method, their low morale for work due to low salary and their involvement in additional jobs and lack of lesson preparation. These factors lead to low commitment to children's learning and progress and alternately affect their interest in school and the value they place on education. Children affected by this begin to attend school irregularly and eventually drop out of school. Kinder and Wilkins (1998) have reported on their findings from a National Foundation for Educational Research (NIEF) project on where parents lay the blame for truancy. They found that parents believe children misbehave and play truancy because they are bored and the national curriculum is failing to address their needs, interest, influence and work to impact several levels.

According to Jonathan (2011) the causes of children non attendance are beyond the direct control of individual schools, as students drop to support their families because of troubles with the laws, or because of pregnancy. Others however are within the hands of education policy makers, superintendents and principals. Thus, students cite boring classes, a school climate not conducive to learning or a curriculum they perceived as irrelevant to their lives as reasons for dropping out of school. Lack of experiential education also contributes to low attendance to school as 81 percent of pupils postulated that they would have been

more likely to stay in school had the curriculum provided more opportunities for experiential learning.

Suspension/Corporal Punishment/Discipline

Suspension is mandatory leave assign to a student as a form of punishment that can last anywhere from one day to several weeks during which time the student is not allowed to attend regular lessons. In some Canadian schools there are two times of suspensions .In-school suspension and out of school suspension. In school suspension requires the student to report to school as usual but sit in a special room all day .Out of school suspension bans the student from being on school grounds. Physical or corporal punishment is the use of force to cause pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control (Straus & Stewart, 1999). Researchers attempt to distinguish between physical punishment and abuse, this is very hard to do and there is general agreement about the dividing line between physical punishment and physical abuse. Discipline is the guidance of children's moral, emotional and physical development, enabling children to take responsibility for them when they are older (Reid, 2007). It involves teaching children the boundaries of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable and it make them aware of the values and actions that are acceptable in their family and society. Corporal punishment included punishment that was often too severe and was thus a proxy for the harsh, punitive discipline that is acknowledged by all experts to be detrimental to children's well-being and ethically unacceptable. Discipline can be positive, for example, praising the child for doing something good or for stopping the child for doing something inappropriate; or discipline

can be negative, for example, smacking a child for doing something wrong. Positive discipline normally involves helping children to understand why certain behaviour is unacceptable and other behaviour is acceptable. Negative discipline focuses on doing what you are told in order to avoid something unpleasant.

A distinction is often made between "power-assertive" and "inductive" discipline. Power-assertive disciplinary methods involve following a child's inappropriate behaviour with a negative consequence (smacking, threats, and withdrawal of privileges) without explanation or justification. Inductive methods involve setting limits, setting up logical consequences, reasoning and explanation (Smith, 2006).

According to a research conducted by Ampiah and Adu-Yeboah (2009) entitled 'Mapping the incidence of school dropout: A case study of communities in Northern Ghana', it was realised that corporal punishment was one of the reasons that makes children dislike school. About 65 percent of the children cited corporal punishment as what they dislike most about school. Also, Furlog (1985) places the responsibility of pupils' behaviour on the parents while the school accepts no responsibility for his behaviour. The school has no adverse effect on low school attendance sine punishment are carefully administered. Some negative behaviours like rudeness and insubordination require some strong measures to make these deviant comply. These behaviour make pupils develop antiauthority outlook and consequently become truants. In some schools teachers have little patience towards pupils' behaviour, no matter what form it takes.

According to the regulations if a teacher finds it necessary to administer corporal punishment then this has to be done under the strict supervision of the head teacher. However in reality 'corporal punishment is frequent, routine and not administered according to official guidelines. Though accepted as normal, it is very unpopular with children (Pryor & Ampiah, 2003). It is often used indiscriminately. Some teachers would cane children when they failed to answer questions in class, when they were late to school, or show the slightest unruly behaviour, they added. Since school authorities cannot look on unconcerned on some negative behaviours like rudeness and insubordination, they would take on some strong measures which these deviants will object. Hence clashes are imminent. These behaviours prone children to develop anti-social outlook and consequently show unwillingness toward school. For instance, in a school where much premium is placed on creativity and imagination, anyone who deviates from this, may be labelled "stupid" "good for nothing' "dull or" block headed' such labels affect the child's personality development and reinforce his unwillingness to school and therefore, consequently end up attending school. However, one argument made against corporal punishments in the United States of America is that some researchers have seen it to be not as effective as positive means for managing student behaviour. These studies have linked corporal punishment to adverse physical, psychological and educational outcomes including, "increased aggressive and destructive behaviour, increased disruptive classroom behaviour, vandalism, poor school achievement, poor attention span,

increased drop-out rate, school avoidance and school phobia, low self-esteem, anxiety, somatic complaints, depression, suicide and retaliation against teacher.

Poor Facilities in Schools

Learning is a complex activity that supremely tests students' motivation and physical conditions. Teaching resources and teachers' skill and curriculum all play a vital role in a child's education but what about the physical condition and design of the actual school facility itself? How do they shape a child's learning experience? Today busy parents may never know with most of them working parents generally find little time to experience, much less evaluate the physical conditions of their child's school when they do visit often during parents-teachers night or open days. Discussion will often focus on their child's learning achievement and progress not on school maintenance or design issues. There are few opportunities for parents to observe a class room or school during the school day but it just during this time that a significant number of students and teachers struggle with such things as noise, glare, mildew, lack of fresh air and hot or cold temperatures. Research is uncovering growing evidence showing that conditions like these and many other aspect of school facilities have a huge and often negative impact on children education aside from things like mold and mildew.

There are adverse yet solvable environmental conditions in many school facilities that are particularly troublesome because of their very real and negative impact on learning. In 1995 the U.S Government Accounting Office release a survey indicating that more than half of U.S schools have deficiency that adversely affect indoor air quality.

In addition Poor air quality forces students to actually miss class because of asthmas attack, and this simply reduces attentiveness. Some of the researches that focus on the conditions of school in Nigeria and how they affect school attendance are those of Urevbu (1997), Aduwa (2004) and Iyamu (2005). Using empirical data and illustrations to support the arguments put forward, these authors presented the school system in Nigeria as having been overtaken by monumental crises. Considering the unattractive, unconducive and dilapidated school environment, these authors are of the view that Nigerian teachers and parents should be grateful to the children who still attend these schools which do not make impact on the quality of life. A number of studies have shown that many school systems particularly those in urban and high poverty areas, are plaque by decaying buildings that threaten the health, safety and learning opportunities of students. For instance on June 26 2008 it was reported that Odumase Presbyterian junior high school building collapsed during school hours killing a 13 year old boy. Bernard Nartey and injuring three other persons. The collapsed building was built in 1883 during the time of the Bassel Missionaries and had not seen any major rehabilitation until that fateful day when the unfortunate incident happened.

Once again the Odumase Krobo presbeterian primary school, the basic counter part of the junior high school that collapsed and killed master Nartey is in a deplorable state, posing similar threads to the lives of the pupils and teachers. According to a public-private Partnership Programme between Ministry of local Government and Rural Development and Maks Publications & Media Services

(2006), school children still learn under trees. This is so because educational facilities in most districts of the Western Region are in deplorable state and discouraging children from patronising the schools. The poor school structures, coupled with the unpredictable rain patterns of the Region, disrupt academic activities in a number of communities on many occasions. In some remote parts of the region, school buildings are constructed with clay, grass, bamboo roofs with volunteers as teachers who are not trained but only motivated to teach. This is because the conditions for teachers in these communities are not conducive to attract the trained ones to those places to work even for a week.

The roads to these communities are also bad, no vehicles, water, electricity, teaching materials and decent accommodation for those who have accepted the challenge to teach in these schools. Both pupils and teachers are left with no option than to travel miles on foot, arriving in the classrooms very tired and not ready to learn. Primary school pupils who are normally forced by their parents to go to school have to dodge classes to engage in odd jobs for money. At Adjeikrom in the Ellembelle district of the western region of Ghana part of the structures built with clay and grass have collapsed and the floors of the schools buildings are not cemented. Sometimes and reptiles enter the classrooms during lessons hours. The same could be said of Kroboline, New Adiebra and Asomase. School structures in thirteen communities in the Elebelle distrit could be compared to market sheds instead of educational facilities. In the Jomoro District, especially Elubo, the border town, pupils in the school near the borders share their classrooms with animals. Children have to report early to school to clean the

droppings of animals before classes begin. In other parts of the same Jomoro pupils loiter around town instead of being in the classroom because the structures are very deplorable. On market days schools do not function because no child goes to the classroom.

Adansi North in the Ashanti Region is also experiencing similar situation as that of the jomoro district as most of the basic schools are in a deplorable state with raked walls, rotten windows and doors frames, rusty and leaking roofs making pupils to fill reluctant to attend school regularly. The situation is more pronounced in the remote areas, that is Aduposo D/A primary, Mosikrom D/A primary, Nyamebekyere D/A primary, Asirifikrom D/A junior high school where there are weak and temporary structured. A public-private Partnership Programme between Ministry of local Government and Rural Development and Maks Publications & Media Services (2006). In Jirapa district of the Upper West Region it also reported that there are still school going age children not attending school and there is also a significant dropout rate even though nongovernmental organisations like Catholic Relief Services and UNICEF are supporting schools in the district.

Peer /Child Related Factors Responsible for Low School Attendance

The family is known to be a socialising agency which is responsible for the development of the individual especially during the childhood years. However, as the individual grows and enters in the period of adolescence in particular, the situation changes. Youngsters at this stage move with peers or friends of the same sex, age and interest among others in the neighbourhood, school and play ground.

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Peer pressure occur when an individual experiences implied or expressed persuasions to adopt similar values, beliefs and goals, or to participate in the same activities as those in the peer group. Peer relationship become richer and more complicated in middle childhood. Whereas preschoolers master basic social skills as they play with friends, older children begin to face issues of acceptance, fitting in exclusion, and social comparison in their peer group. Thompson (2007), the nature of friendship chances in middle childhood to incorporate philological closeness as well as share activities and friendships thus become more intense and exclusive. Children create a small circle of close friends and are more upset when friendship ends. Friendships also coalesce into larger peer groups or clubs with their own norms for dress, vocabulary, hair styles, and activities and behaviour. These norms distinguish those who are included and excluded from the group and create pressure on group members to conform negatively and at the same time such can help children build self esteem and social skills positively. Hurlock (1968) in his study into the influence of educational aspirations of high school students came out with a finding that peer influence is stronger among boys than that of girls or o education schools. He noted again that peer influence can greatly lead children to drop out of schools especially in broken homes. Also the responsibility and motivation of children vary by developmental stage. It is parents who bear the primary responsibility for having their elementary age school children arrive at school each day. However by middle school and high school students have much greater autonomy and may make their own decisions about whether or not to attend school on any given day. During middle school

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some truancy is undoubtedly due to the experimentations with risky behaviour common to this age. For this reason with young indolence it is best to treat truancy as a mistake. Many peer/child related factors are identified to be responsible for low school attendance. Some of these factors are dealt with one after the other.

Teasing /Bullying

Bullying is the use of force or coercion to abuse or intimidate others the behaviour can be habitual and involve an imbalance of social or physical power. It can include verbal harassment or threat, physical assault or coercion and may be directed repeatedly towards particular victims, perhaps on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexuality or ability. Bullying among school-aged youth is increasingly being recognized as an important problem affecting well-being and social functioning. While a certain amount of conflict and harassment is typical of youth peer relations, bullying presents a potentially more serious threat to healthy youth development.

Bullying is characterised by an individual behaving in a certain way to gain power over another person. A 2012 paper from the Berkman Center, An Overview of State Anti-Bullying Legislation and Other Related Laws, acknowledged that bullies often target their victims based on 'creed, religion, disability, gender or sex, nationality or national origin, race and sexual orientation. 'It grouped bullying into three basic types, thus abuse emotional, physical and verbal. National Centre for Education Statistics suggests that bullying can be classified into two categories that is to say direct and indirect

bullying. Ross (1996) states that direct bullying involves a great deal of physical aggression, such as shoving and poking, throwing things, slapping, choking, punching and kicking, beating, stabbing, pulling hair, scratching, biting, scraping, and pinching. He also suggests indirect bullying is characterised by attempting to socially isolate the victim. This isolation is achieved through a wide variety of techniques, including spreading gossip, refusing to socialise with the victim, bullying other people who wish to socialise with the victim, and criticizing the victim's manner of dress and socially significant makers like the victim's race, religion, disability, sex, or sexual preference. Although there is little evidence to suggest a strong direct linkage between bullying and low attendance to school, an OJJDP study found that if bullying results in the victim becoming less engaged in school, that victim is more likely to cease attending and achieving (Seeley, Tombari, Bennett & Dunkle, 2011). Lowenstein (2003) asserted that many pupils who are victims are afraid to go to school; they may suffer from poor attendance. They might be afraid to ride the school bus, use the bathroom at school. One study found that 8 percent of 8th graders in the United States miss at least one day of school each mouth because they are afraid of bullies. Victims often earn lower grades due to poor attendance, stress and worry. They become obsessed with the bullying and how to avoid it. This leaves little or no time, energy or concern for school work and learning. If a child is being bullied they end up being excluded from activities such as yard games and general healthy conversations. If they are deprived of these things they may fail to develop good communication skills as well as learning how to handle and resolve disputes, only ever playing the part of

a submission person who is forced to accept another person's argument or position (Li, 2007).

Students who have self confidence, are well balanced, are able to communicate to others and make new friends tend to have better attendance records than students who feel their education has been of 'no help' in these respects. Those who had skipped several days or weeks were also less likely to feel the discipline procedures in their school had been fair. In general, disaffection with school was particularly apparent among those with poor attendance records, that is, those who report having missed several days or weeks at a time. In contrast, levels of disaffection are not particularly noteworthy among students who skip an occasional lesson or day from school. Attendance is also related to attitudes towards, and opinions of, peers and classmates (Geser, 2007). While 79 percent of those who never skipped school or lessons during their last year at school felt their friends took school seriously, this figure is less than half among those who had skipped days or weeks of school. Similarly, those with poor attendance rates were significantly more likely to feel that there were too many troublemakers in their class and that teachers could not keep order in class.

Furthermore, students that had been suspended also report more incidences of being bullied, particularly among male students that have been suspended compared to other males. Many callers to Child line say they are self harming. There are effects on school work too. Children miss lessons or are too scared to attend school. The Anti-Bullying centre in Dublin made it clear that national and international research has shown that bullies know no boundaries of age, sex or

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socio-economic background. It can take many forms, it can be short term, or continue over long periods, even years. The powers of concentration of victims can suffer adversely affecting their capacity for learning and anxiety about going to school.

Health Factors

Children with a chronic illness or physical disability are known to be at increased risk for psychosocial adjustment problems when compared with their peers (Wallander & Varni, 1998). Since most children spend a large part of their lives at school, it follows that it is particularly important to understand the impact of a child's illness or disability on school life. Even when an illness does not itself result in cognitive impairment, children with chronic illness perform less well academically than their healthier peers. .Yet increasing numbers of children are surviving illness and managing their conditions (Woodroffe, Glickman, Barker& Power, 1993). A research carried out in the United States with 200 children with asthma, parents identified a number of difficulties in managing asthma in school, including the side effects of drugs such as tiredness, teacher limiting access to medication and routine exclusion by teachers from physical activities which could be beneficial for the child. (Freudenberg, Feidman, Clark, Milman, Valle &Wasilewsi, 1980). Mental and physical health factors could possibly play an indirect role. Psychiatrists consider truancy as one of many symptoms of serious mental health difficulties, especially when truancy begins before age 13.

Pourat, and Gina (2009) in their study on 'Unaffordable Dental Care Is Linked to Frequent School Absences' mentioned that tooth decay is the single

most common chronic disease of childhood and affects nearly 60 percent of children in the United States. In 2007, approximately 7 percent of school-age children in California missed at least one day of school due to a dental problem. The ability to afford needed care is the key difference between those children who miss school and those who do not. This report examines the link between unaffordable dental care and missed school days, especially among children who are uninsured, lower-income, limited English-proficient, Asian American, and who have poor oral health. Children lose approximately fifty million school hours each year to dental related illness and low income children lose twelve times as much.

Also poor academic performance may compound psychology problems. For instance research concerning thirty one children with cancer show that following a period of absence for treatment, academic problems identified one year after their return to school were predictive of psychosocial problems five years later, Sloper, Larcombe and Charton (1994). Physical health issues known to affect behavour include hearing or speech problems, asthma, allergies, serious illness such as cancer and many others. It is important to note that none of these would cause a specific behavour problem such as truancy. Rather, the interaction of these conditions with the child temperament, the parent's reactions and the school and community environments and so on, will determine the impact on behavour. Also any health problem that results in a significant number of missed school days can result in a student falling so far behind academically that depression or discouragement sets in. These almost always cause students to simply turn out

and stop trying, and some will react with strong desire to avoid school. .In the adolescent years as students become more oriented toward the adult world of work, this kind of academic weakness is one of the primary factors that can lead to low school attendance. The student simply stays at work putting longer hours until eventually doping out of school entirely in order to work full time.

Low Self Esteem

Reid (1999) identified the child self confidence/self-concept as an important determinant of the type of behaviour, whether positive or negative that he puts up in school. He explains that constant failure inevitably begins to influence the opinion children hold about themselves. Positive self-concepts make children solve problems in a purposeful and realistic manner. On the other hand, negative concepts make children feel incompetent and inadequate and make them adopt a defeatist attitude towards problems. Such negative attitudes toward school work inevitably leads to many behaviour problems in school. Low self-esteem has been shown to be correlated with a number of negative outcomes, such as depression. Pupils with low self esteem also fail to complete work and this turns them into low achievers. This can lead to pupils dropping out of the lesson altogether. Also a pupil with low self esteem may not have much in common with most of their peer or with the ethos of the school. This can result in them avoiding school altogether. Rather than continuing to do nothing at school they will transfer their energies to doing nothing useful out of school. This may lead to boredom and a downward spiral towards vandalism and delinquency. Fontana (1986) identified the child self-concept as an important determinant of the type behaviour, whether

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positive or negative that he puts up in school. He explains that constant failure inevitably begins to influence the behaviour children hold about themselves. Positive self concepts make children solve problems in purposeful and realistic manner. On the other hand, negative concepts make children feel incompetent and inadequate and make them adopt a defeatist attitude towards problems. Such negative attitude towards school work inevitably lead to many behaviour problems in school. Cloural and Kituse (1963) looked more to the structure of relationships within school in between teachers and pupils, how these progressively erode the self esteem of working class pupils and produce feeling of inferioty that can lead to delinquent behaviour. Low self esteem has been shown to be correlated with a number of negative outcomes.

Drugs and Alcohol Abuse/Substance Use

Research asserts that for individuals who begin using illicit substances at an early age, several risk factors may increase the likelihood of continued and problematic use in later age, when substance related crime becomes much more likely. Risk factors include negative peer associations; unrealistic believes about the prevalence of illicit drug consumption, inconsistent or abusive parenting, school exclusion, and feeling of low self worth. According to Dlaf, Begin and Sawka (2005), roughly 62.3 percent of youth aged 16-17 engaged in early use of alcohol and 29.2 percent in early cannabis use in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Scientists know that alcohol problems are tied to lower grades, poor attendance and increases in dropout rate. Dowdall and Wechsler (2002) found

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that as rates of alcohol use by 12 to 17 year-olds increase, grade point averages decrease. Middle school students whose peers avoid using alcohol and other drugs score higher on state reading and mathematics tests than other students. In any given age group, heavy and binge drinkers are 4-6 times more likely than non-drinkers to say they cut classes or skipped school. They are twice as likely as non-drinkers to say that their school work is poor, and they report more frequently that they are disobedient at school. Among high school students, those who use alcohol are five times more likely to drop out than those who don't use alcohol. These problems are not limited to the middle and high school setting; hangovers and drinking by college students lead to missed classes and falling behind in school work. Alcohol is implicated in more than 40 percent of all college academic problems and in 28 percent of all college dropouts. Levy, Douglas, Jonathan, Winickoff and Rigotti (2011) asserted that children of parents who smoke have worse attendance than their peers with healthier parents,

Effect of Low School Attendance on the Academic Performance of Students

Low attendance to school has immediate and long-term consequences for communities in terms of public safety. Truant youth have been found to be involved in criminal acts such as burglary, auto theft and vandalism. Communities with high rates of truancy are likely to have correspondingly high rates of daytime criminal activity. In the long term, the poorer educational and occupational attainment of formerly truant students is likely to increase their risk for adult criminality and incarceration (Gay, Cooney, O'Connor, & Small, (2007).The problem of absenteeism is becoming the concern of every member of

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society since it has negative consequences at both the individual and social level. For instance, studies carried by Wadesango and Machingambi (2011) have established that students who attend classes more regularly seem to be more successful in their studies than those who frequently absent themselves. In a related study, Baldacchino and Farrugia (2002) examined the relationship between class attendance and performance in the context of agricultural economics classes and confirmed that student absenteeism resulted in lower grades. Marburger (2001) also reported a carefully designed study of attendance and test performance among university students. Students were significantly more likely to answer incorrectly those test questions covering material taught during days on which the students were absent. Contributing to the same debate, Reid (2005) postulates that when students are absent from school, there are a wide range of short term educational consequences that they face. First and foremost, students miss out on assignments. By missing out on assignments, they are more likely to underachieve or perform poorly in different subjects. This discussion does not only view low attendance to school narrowly in terms of its obvious negative impact on student achievement but also in terms of its social outcomes. As Baderin (2005) observes, most students who skip classes tend to perform badly thereby severely limiting their chances of economic and social well-being throughout their adult lives. Student absenteeism is also a major concern for lecturers at institutions of higher learning. Absences create a dead, tiresome, unpleasant classroom environment that makes students who come to class uncomfortable and the lecturer irritable (Marburger, 2001). Absenteeism disturbs

the dynamic teaching-learning environment and adversely affects the overall well-being of classes (Segal, 2008).

Also lecturers who spend class time re-teaching lessons take instructional time away from students who attend class regularly and the extra time spent going over absentee homework and class assignments takes time away from lecturer planning periods and time needed to provide individual assistance (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011). Also according to Enomoto (2011), when students perceive that some lecturers do not care enough to follow up on absences, their motivation for attendance is not high. Interestingly, a converse view of compulsory attendance is provided by social psychological. Reid (1999) suggest that a higher proportion of truants and persistent absentees than the normal school age population have lower academic self concepts, lower general levels of self esteem, greater patterns of alienations from school over certain issues, higher levels of neuroticism and higher level of antisocial behaviour. Also they are not liked much by other children, often appear miserable, unhappy, fearful or distressed; have poor concentration or short attention span; often tell lies; are often disobedient and may have stolen things on one or more occasions. Besides the behaviour of truants in school can adversely affect the learning and behaviour of other pupils. Learmouth (1995).attendance rate is important because students are more likely to succeed in academics when they attend school consistently. It is difficult for the teacher and the class to build their skills and progress if a large number of students are frequently absent. In addition to falling behind in academics students who are not in school on a regular basis are more

likely to get into trouble with the law and cause problems in their communities. When students are absent from class, they miss valuable information resulting from peer-lecturer interaction and the benefits of the specific examples lecturers use to clarify difficult concepts. It is important to note that a primary issue of chronic absenteeism is not that there is no excuse provided, but rather, the excuse is not a valid one. Wadesango and Machingambi (2011) indicate that acts of delinquency are more frequent among students, who exhibit low grades, have spotty attendance, and later on drop out of school.

Wadesango and Machingambi, (2011) further said students who missed class on a given date were significantly more likely to respond incorrectly to questions relating to material covered that day than students who were present. The hypothesis that class attendance is likely to be correlated with student learning has been investigated empirically in economic education literature. Most surprisingly, most studies have found an inverse relationship between absenteeism and course performance. The relation between attendance and performance in one large lecture course suggest that attendance may substantially affect learning. The difference in performance between a student who attends school regularly and one who attends sporadically is about a full letter grade (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011). Clyne (1966) on his part said absence from school may also lead to the loss, perhaps irretrievably of such educational benefits as the child intelligence have entitled him to. Under present day highly eating and competitive conditions secondary and higher education the loss of a year or even several months schooling may make the difference between passing

and failing qualifying examinations or for the less gifted child, it may mean permanent educational backwardness either generally or in some field of knowledge. In Ghana however, known refusal or absenteeism has not yet attracted legal implications on parents and pupils the FCUBE concept has provisions for compulsory education for all school going age children in the basic school system when the FCUBE becomes fully operational.

In schools generally, absenteeism lowest the academic standards and general performance in terms of sporting and socio-cultural activities of the affected school. Children in such schools learn to be delinquent and deviant and peer groupings of questionable characters and difficult to control. Low school attendance among students which can lead to school drop out in the country is having serious effects on students who happened to drop out and their parents as well as the nation as a whole. Ashirifie (1988) reported that the effect of school drop out in the country is manifesting itself in a large pool of unemployment youth roaming aimlessly on the street especially the urban areas. She found out that such students end up becoming truck pushers and young female porters. Other effects she identified were juvenile pick pockets, drug addicts and high rate of teenage pregnancy and prostitution.

Suggested Measures to Minimise Low School Attendance in Basic Schools

In the nineteen century, children who did not conform to regulations were punished. When the demands of the British education act of 1870 led to an increase in the number of children brought before the court, short detention or truant schools and day industrial schools were established. A class teacher's

reactions to a truant depend upon his previous dealings with the child he may send him to the Headteachers for punishment. For most educational authorities in England and indeed Ghana restrict the use of the cane. He may have the absentee transferred to another school or he may arrange extra lessons to make up for the lost time. As Tyerman (1968) said it is not always easy for a parent to know his child has been to school, some headteachers therefore give attendance cards to children who are known to play truant. This card is sign by the teacher every morning and afternoon and by the parents every evening.

Furthermore as schools become bigger and specialisation increases children moving from classrooms to classroom and from teacher to teacher for their different lessons can run away from school after the morning and afternoon register has been marked. In this case it is wise to roll call for each lesson since the longer a child plays truant without being caught the more difficult it is to deal with him or her. Some schools try to reduce low school attendance by insisting on a doctor's note after a child has been away for several days. Inquiries to family doctors can also be made by the local school medical officers. In the case of a frequent offender the headteaher refer the pupil to the local child guidance center. The child guidance team social worker, psychologist and psychiatrist may all work together on the problem or one member of the team may concentrate upon some particular aspect. Tyerman (1968) added that there should be close corporation and collaboration between and among the headteahers and teachers, the parents and the attendance officers and guidance co-ordinators in the Ghanaian situation. Emphasis is on the guidance coordinators and school Welfare

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Officers fostering closer links and co-operation with the headteahers and parents. The emphasis nowadays is increasing up welfare. The attendance officers or welfare officers' main concern no longer to catch truants but to deal with the causes rather than the effects. Most schools in Britain are however visited each week by a school attendance officer. He is given the names of children who are absent without notice and he calls at their homes. He is therefore one of the earliest officers to visit a home family. His first approach is usually to remind parents, tactfully of their responsibility. If the circumstance justifies it he may call on his colleagues from other branches of authority to help the family. But if the parents are mere being selfish and if persuasion fails the officer proceeds along more formal lines such as warning letters, request to appear before an attendance committee and perhaps prosecution.

Under such scheme one could imagine that few children could play truancy for very long time without being found out, but some teachers forget to send an absence card to the headteaher. Some heads also omit to send all the cards to the attendance officer. Some parents cannot be found at home despite repeated visits. This laudable scheme however does not exist in Ghana and as such there are many drop-outs in our school system.

There are also various initiatives and interventions addressing low school attendance. These vary from in-school programmes and partnerships with other organisations to interventions introduced by Government departments. This section explores some of the attempts made to address the issue of low attendance in basic schools. Reviewing some of the existing initiatives it was evident that

schools have a major role in promoting and monitoring school attendance. This is usually done by rewarding regular attendance, informing parents of unauthorised absences and systematically monitoring attendance. Webb and Vulliami (2004) suggested alternative curricula for students likely to become persistent absentees in the form of lessons outside school and work experience. This approach was seen to benefit those pupils who 'did not respond well to the traditional academic curriculum; who had experienced little academic success; or who would gain from a curricular approach offering greater vocational interest and relevance (Treasury, 2007). Railsback (2004) suggested that Attendance Reduction Demonstration Programme to address low attendance or poor attendance has to include certain key components involving schools, families, communities and outside agencies. The key components to be included are: consistent policies and practices, which keep children in school, rather than pushing them out involve families in all programme planning and implementation, there must be mutual trust and communication for families and schools to work together to solve problems, provide a continuum of support to students, including meaningful incentives and consequences. Support should include academic (e.g. tutoring, after school programmes, creating smaller learning communities); behavioural (E.g. mentoring, group or individual counselling); family and health support (E.g. drug and alcohol rehabilitation). Meaningful incentives should be long, not short term and consequences should not be punitive, but serve to keep students in, not push them out (e.g. in-school suspensions rather than out of-school suspensions), collaboration with local law enforcement, community organisations, mentoring

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programmes and social services. This may be challenging at first because community groups often see attendance as a school responsibility. But collaboration is indeed beneficial to pool resources and to have more community input, ensure building-level support and commitment to keeping children in the educational mainstream, continuously evaluate programmes and obtain meaningful and relevant data to make informed changes. According to Clyne (1966), absence from school has an important legal aspect. In most civilised countries school attendance is compulsory by law and absence may invoke penalties against children and parents. A parent found guilty of failure to secure the regular attendances of a child is liable to a fine or in the case of further offense a term of imprisonment. A child brought before the juvenile court because of failure to attend school regularly may be treated   as 'in need of care and protection.

Beck (2012) on his part provided a useful classification of initiatives aimed at improving attendance in schools. It includes, having appropriate service-level agreements, formulating preventative strategies, involving all pupils within a school or year group or all teachers within a school, Having clear initial and first-day responses for absence, targeting particular pupils, days and lessons, implementing appropriate early intervention schemes, targeting pupils whose attendance falls below a certain level, identifying specific attendance problems in schools, having good strategies to deal with disaffected behaviour, fostering appropriate interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary links.

Extensive career exploration and related career education before and during high school are important for developing educational goals and setting timelines for achieving those goals. Creating an awareness of career possibilities and related interests eases the school-to-work transition. The Peninsula Academies Programme at Menlo-Atherton High School and Sequoia High School in California pairs students with volunteer mentors from companies that are aligned with students' career interests. The mentors acquaint students with the world of work and help parents formulate career plans with their children. Students begin the programme in the tenth grade and receive three years of computer or electronics instruction. The curriculum is highly work-related and, as an incentive to graduate, students are guaranteed a job after they complete the programme (Naylor, 1987).

Another approach to community involvement is the At-School, On Time, Ready to Work programme that has been implemented in Kansas. Students under sixteen years old who are not attending school are reported to the county attorney. He invites them to sign a ninety-day programme contract that provides the following: a supervision worker to verify the student's school attendance and to meet with the student several times a week; a support group and therapy services that teach self-esteem and confidence-building skills; and education services for the student's parents, focusing on effective parenting techniques and the importance of their child's education (Garry, 1996). We must do everything to improve school attendance so that all children benefit from good teaching. Successive governments have focussed overwhelmingly on tackling truancy

amongst older children. We now need a fundamental change in approach. We must also equip schools to tackle the minority of parents who do not heed that message. Sanctions are most likely to work if their effect is immediate and if they are simple to administer.

Addison (1967) writing on the role of parent teacher association under the caption 'home and the child' stated that, parents and teachers should come together to think and plan about the welfare of the child. Parents and teachers must interest themselves and all that goes on there. Absence of Parent and Teacher Association presupposes the absence of formal cooperation between the community and the school. When children realise that the community, home and the school all participates in education it heightens their interest and desire to be in school always so as to feel accepted by all. If engaging in petty trading or helping parents to do some job instead of going to school is not frowned by parents, community and the school, children can do it comfortably thereby encouraging absenteeism.

Summary

After more than 130 years of compulsory schooling and a century of research into low school attendance we are little nearer finding definitive solutions. In fact, in some ways research continues to reveal how increasingly complex the field of study of truancy and school absenteeism has become. There is little sign of Britain losing its position as the country in Europe with the highest rates of non-attendance and unauthorised absence. Non-attendance and truancy continue to fester, promoted by such factors as social inequalities, poverty, the

anti-educational attitudes and incompetence of some parents, low literacy and numeracy skills, poor and undemanding teaching, boredom among certain pupils, adverse peer pressure, unattractive school buildings and adverse school climates. There is a long way to go. One part of the problem is that successive governments in Ghana are constantly reacting to truancy though a whole range of initiatives, some of which are often ill conceived or too hastily introduced.

No one can really be sure of, or even estimate accurately, the precise long-term costs of non-attendance and truancy from school, especially for the consequences of their adult lifestyles (Malcolm et al., 2002). There is little doubt that disaffected pupils continue to cost the taxpayer considerable sums of money not least in terms of professionals' time and support, legal fees, social security, housing benefit, crime prevention, mental health budgets and prolonging the generational truancy syndrome which is affecting some parts of the world. This point can be reiterated when the real costs of trying to prevent truancy and return pupils to school are taken into account along with all the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary support needed, which includes the cost of combating crime and youth offending. (Boyle & Goodall, 2005). Throughout the United Kingdom the overall improvement in attendance levels over the last ten years is only slight. Preventing and combating absence is expensive in terms of staff time. It is also costly for schools, LEAs and the nation. It is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary oriented.

There is still a lack of successful early intervention techniques being applied and the evidence is that more support needs to be given at the primary

and initial stages before it is too late and pupils' attitudes have hardened. Given that 36 per cent of pupils begin their history of truancy or non-attendance in the primary phase, and more girls are becoming disaffected and truanting, much more research into practically based solutions needs to be undertaken. It will be interesting to discover how recent Ghana government initiatives such as Every Child Matters and the Antisocial Behaviour Act will help to improve the position over a considerable period of time.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is mainly concerned with procedures and techniques employed in carrying out the research. It describes the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, instruments, data collection procedure and data analysis.

Research Design

The research design that was used in this study is the descriptive survey. Babbie and Mouton (2001) define descriptive survey as the method of research that simply looks with intense accuracy at the phenomena of the moment and then describes precisely what the researcher sees. Descriptive survey is probably the best method which is available to use in collecting data for the purpose of describing a population large enough to observe directly. Such surveys, according to Bassey (1995), are also excellent vehicles for the measurement of attitudes and orientations prevalent in a large population. It also involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or answer research questions concerning that status of the study (Gay, 1992). Amedahe (2002) also maintains that in descriptive research accurate description of activities, objects, processes and person is the objective.

Murphy (2006) said descriptive research is an innovative tool for researchers. It presents an opportunity to fuse both quantitative and qualitative that serves as means to reconstruct the 'what is" of a topic. She further stated that

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descriptive research requires the use of specific forms of data collection and also provides a multifaceted approach for data collection. This can include case studies; observation or surveys. For example, a survey can provide statistics about an event while also illustrating how people experienced that event. She added, it offers a unique means of data collection. There are also two main benefits of descriptive research thus being able to use various forms of data as well as incorporating experience. It also gives researchers the ability to look at whether they are studying in so many various aspects and can provide a bigger overview as opposed to other forms of research. However confidentiality is the primary weakness of descriptive research. Participants may also refuse to provide answers to questions they feel is so personnel. Furthermore the study may contain errors as the researcher may record what he or she wants to hear and ignore data that does not conform to the researcher's hypothesis. Overcoming a researcher bias is extremely difficult for descriptive research practitioners and those who chose to use a descriptive research approach must be aware of their influence on the outcome of the research. Information may be obtained from a sample rather than from an entire population. The descriptive design allowed me to capture the participants' own perspective rather than me using what I think about a particular issue.

Population

The target population of the study is made up of Headteachers, teachers, students and their parents in Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality. The accessible population comprised head teachers, teachers, students and their

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parents in the Elmina circuit. The Headteachers are thirteen, teachers are two hundred and sixty whiles students are thousand nine hundred and fifty and their parents. This population was used because it possesses in-depth knowledge on issues related to low attendance to school.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample for the study consisted of 130 respondents from the 13 junior high schools in Elmina circuit. It was made up of 39 teachers, 39 students, 39 parents and 13 head teachers. In each of the thirteen junior high schools in the circuit, the class teachers were purposively selected. These are teachers who have been assigned to each class by the head teachers. A student who has the lowest total attendance in each class was selected based on the interview I had with the class teachers with the support of the class attendance register which indicated the student with the lowest total attendance to school. The rationale behind this selection mode is because they are the only students who could answer the research questions since they have been experiencing the problem of absenteeism. For the parents who were selected as respondents, it was the parents of students who had the lowest total attendance to school that were chosen. One head teacher from each school was also purposively selected.

Instruments

Self-developed questionnaires were used to collect data from the teachers, students and the head teachers while an interview guide was used to collect data from the parents or guardians. The use of the questionnaire enabled me to collect data from almost all the teachers, pupils and head teachers considered. The

interview guide also helped me to collect data from the parents since some of them were not able to read and write. The items in the questionnaires were both closed ended and opened ended. The questionnaires also consisted of various sections. Interview guide for parents consisted of three sections. Section B consisted of home related factors responsible for low school attendance among junior high school students and Section C comprised measures to minimise low school attendance among the students. Questionnaire for teachers and headteachers comprised four sections. Section B was on school related factors responsible for low school attendance among the pupils, Section C was on peer related factors responsible for low school attendance and Section D comprised ways of minimising low school attendance. Questionnaire for students also contained four sections thus Section B involving home related factors responsible for low school attendance among Junior High School students, Section C involving school related factors responsible for low school attendance and Section D involving peer related factors responsible for low school attendance among the pupils. Sections A of the headteachers, teachers and students questionnaire were on biographical data. Records were also used to find out academic performance of students. These data comprised end of term examination scores of the students with the lowest total school attendance for 2012/2013 academic year.

Pilot-Testing of Instruments

To determine how valid the items are, I presented copies of the instrument to my supervisors to read and to make the necessary corrections to ensure that the

instruments are valid. I also pilot-tested the questionnaire in three junior high schools in Komenda circuit. The inhabitants of both towns are directly into fishing, farming and trading. During the pilot-testing of the instrument, I made the respondents to write all their comments concerning the instrument on separate pieces of paper which were collected, studied and consequently used to improve upon the validity and reliability of the instruments.

Pilot- testing the questionnaires paved the way for me to gain feedback on the completeness and appropriateness of the items in the questionnaire. Gonbach Alpha reliability co-efficient of 0.81, 0.79 and 0.71 for teachers' questionnaire, headteachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaire respectively were obtained. These alpha values were considered as an acceptable measure of determining the reliability of an instrument for research purpose because Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) have indicated that such reliability co-efficient are considered high and therefore adequate.

Data Collection Procedure

The instruments were self-administered. This took place after I had taken an introductory letter from the Department of Basic Education, University of Cape Coast to the district office for onward introduction to the various head teachers and the purpose of the study explained to them. I arrived in each school at about 8:30 am each morning. At each school, each class teacher with the help of the class attendance register was able to get me the students with the lowest total attendance for second term 2012/2013 academic year. These students from the various classes were put together in a class room and made to respond to the

students' questionnaire. Before answering the questionnaire the items were explained to them. The completed questionnaires were collected the same day. The return rate of the students' questionnaire was 100%. In each school questionnaires were also administered to the class teachers who were purposively selected. These are teachers who have been assigned to each class by their headteachers. I took time to explain to them the purpose of the study and solicited their assistance. The return rate of teachers' questionnaire was 90%.

Questionnaires were also administered to headteachers in their various schools. Completed questionnaire were retrieved on the third day personally. The return rate of headteachers questionnaire was 100%. The students with the lowest total attendance took me to their various homes to interview their parents or guardians. Each interview session took about two hours. The interview was tape recorded. What was recorded was played back to the hearing of each interviewee. Out of 39 parents that were purposively selected only 34 were available to be interviewed.

Data Analysis

The data collected from different schools was edited, coded and scored then tabulated after coding. Then each of the stated objectives of the study was analysed with reference to the data collected. The analysis was done according to research questions. Research question 1, 2, 3 and 5 were analysed using frequencies and percentages. Research question 4 was analysed using Pearson correlation coefficient. Documents containing pupils' end of term examination results for 2012/2013 academic year were used to determine the effect of each of

the home, school and peer/ child related factors on the academic performance of students with the lowest attendance in junior high school.

The coding system that I adopted for the responses are as follows: 1=Yes and 2=No as well as 1=Male and 2=Female and the scoring is 1=Strongly Disagree;   2=Disagree; 3= Agree; 4=Strongly Agree. I used descriptive statistics as the statistical technique to reduce the quantitative data on all the research questions into frequencies and percentages. Descriptive statistics were used because it enabled me to analyze and describe the data in order to address each specific research questions in the study. All the data that were gathered from the open-ended questions were stated as other factors responsible for low school attendance under the appropriate headings.
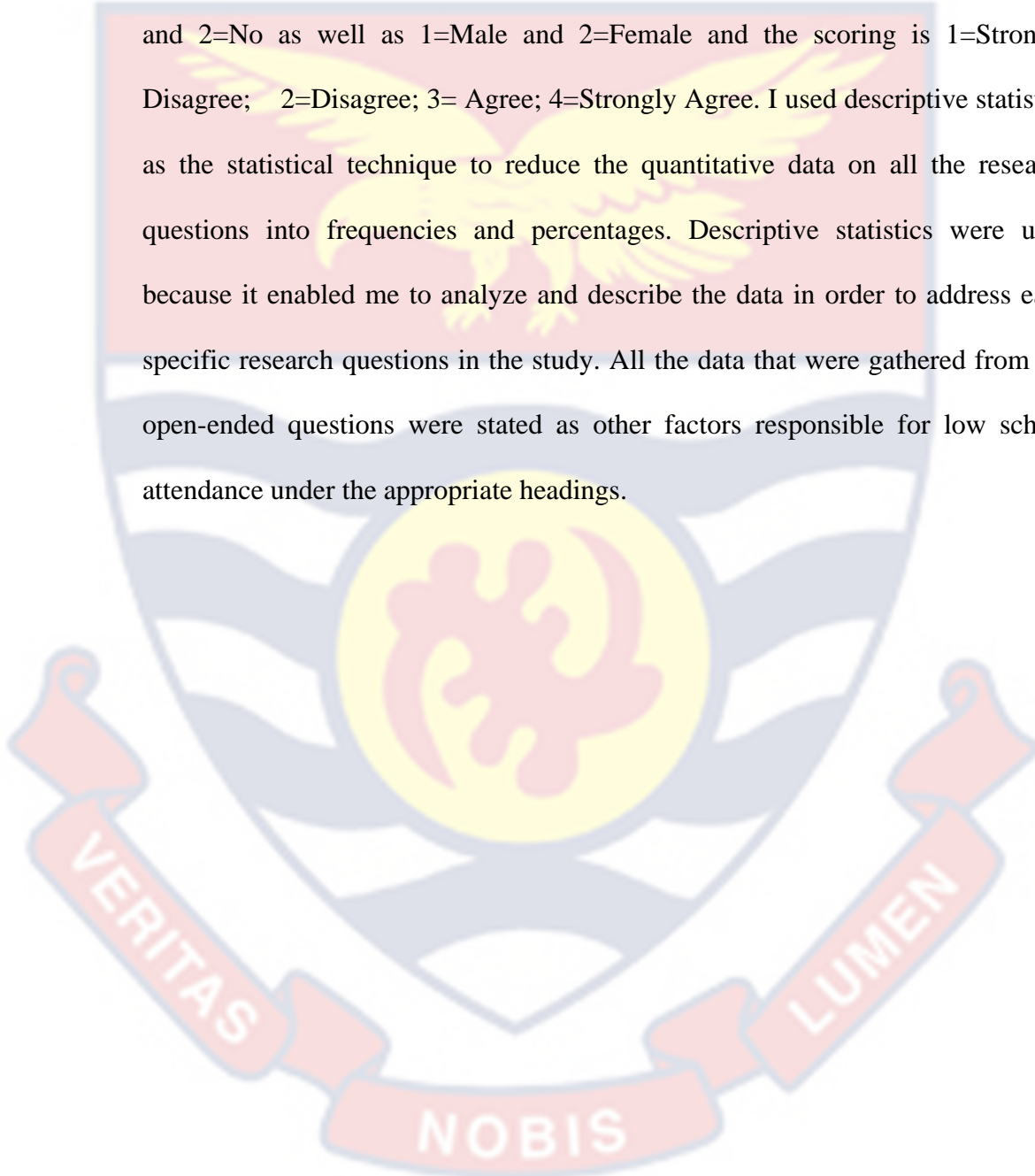
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of data collected from the various respondents and the discussions of the findings. The analysis helped me to find out the extent to which each of the related factors which causes low attendance to school among junior high school students as stated in the literature review account for low school attendance. These related factors have been sub-titled and categorized to make the analysis easy to understand.

Demographic Information of Respondents

Items were developed to collect information on the demographic characteristics of teachers, headteachers, parents and students who participated in the study. Table 1 shows the sample of the respondents

Table 1: Respondents

Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Pupils	39	32%
Teachers	35	29%
Parents	34	28%
Head teachers	13	11%
Total	**121**	**100%**

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As shown in Table 1, the respondents comprised 39 (32%) students, 35 (29%) teachers and 34 (28%) parents. There were 13 (11%) headteachers. Table 2 shows the gender composition of respondents.

Table 2: Composition of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Head teachers		Teachers		Parents		Students	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	7	53.8	1 9	53.8	18	52.9	21	53.8
Female	6	46.2	16	45.7	16	47.1	18	46.2
Total	**13**	**100.0**	**35**	**100.0**	**34**	**100.0**	**39**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork, 2013.

The results in Table 2 shows that 7 (53.8 %) of the 13 headteachers were males while 6 (46.2 %) were females. Out of the 35 teachers who responded to the questionnaire 19 (53.8 %) were males whiles the remaining 16 (45.7 %) were females. Eighteen (52.9%) of the parents who were interviewed were males whiles 16 (47.1%) were females. Out of 39 students who answered the questionnaire 21 (53.8%) were males whiles 18 (46.2%) were females. Thus, a significant number of the participants in the study were males.

Table 3: Composition of Respondents by Age

	Head teachers		Teachers		Parents		Students	
Age (Years)	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
11-15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12-16	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	53.9
16-20	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	47.2
20-24	0	0	5	14.3	2	5.9	0	0
25-29	1	7.7	6	17.1	6	17.6	0	0
30-34	3	23.1	9	25.7	9	26.5	0	0
35-39	0	0	9	25.7	0	0	0	0
40 and Above	9	69.2	6	17.1	17	50.0	0	0
Total	**13**	**100.0**	**35**	**100.0**	**34**	**100.0**	**39**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Table 3 shows that 9 (69.2%) of the head teachers are 40 years and above, 9 (25.7 %) teachers and 9 (26.5%) parents are between the ages of 30-34 and another 9 (25.2 %) of the teachers fall between the ages of 35-39. Twenty one students were between the ages of 12-16 while 11 were between 16 and 20 years. Item 4 sought to find out the academic and professional qualifications of the Head teachers and teachers. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Highest Academic Qualification of Teachers, Head teachers and Parents

Academic Qualification	Head teachers		Teachers		Parents	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
MSLC	0	0	0	0	9	26.5
Cert A (4 yr/3 yr post sec	0	0	2	5.97	4	11.8
Diploma	0	0	17	48.6	3	8.8
Bachelor Degree	9	69.2	15	42.9	0	0
Masters Degree	4	30.8	1	2.9	0	0
No schooling	0	0	0	0	18	53
Total	**13**	**100. 0**	**35**	**100.0**	**34**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork, 2013.

As shown in Table 4, 17 (48.6 %) of the teachers had diploma and 15 (42.9%) had bachelor degree. The table also shows that one (2.9%) of the teachers possessed a master's degree. The highest academic qualification the parents' possessed was diploma and only 3 (8.8) had this qualification. Eighteen (53.0%) of the parents were illiterates. The table also indicates that the teachers had obtained the skills, knowledge and competencies that were desirable to support the implementation of the basic education curriculum. This is very important at the basic level because OfStEd (2007) has made it clear that many pupils are turned off school by an irrelevant curriculum and problems catching up with work if they fall behind. It is claimed there is a direct link between the overall standard of teaching and the number of lessons missed. OfStEd (2007) says reasons given by pupils for skipping classes include finding some lessons

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boring, difficulties getting on with teachers, problems catching up after falling behind and the relevance of the curriculum.

Table 5: Marital Status of Teachers, Head teachers and Parents'

Marital Status	Teachers		Head teachers		Parents	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Single	13	37.1	0	0	9	26.5
Married	16	45.7	9	69.2	17	50.0
Divorced	3	8.6	2	15.4	4	11.8
Widowed	3	8.6	1	7.7	2	5.9
Separation	0	0	1	7.7	2	5.9
Total	**35**	**100. 0**	**13**	**100.0**	**34**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork, 2013.

Table 5 shows that 16 (45.7%) of the teachers were married, 9 (69.2%) of the head teachers were also married as well as 17 (50.0%) of the parents. However, 13 (37.1%) of the teachers were single, no head teacher was single and 9 (26.5%) of the parents were single. Table 5 also indicated that only 3(8.6%) teachers, 2 (5.9%) parents and 1(7,7%) headteaher lost their life partners.

Analyses of Research Questions

Home Related Factors

Research Question 1: What Home Related Factors are Responsible for Low School Attendance among Junior High School Students?

Research question 1 sought to find out home related factors that are responsible for low school attendance among junior high school students.

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Frequency and percentages were used to analyse the quantitative data that were collected from the respondents. In the analysis strongly agreed and agreed are considered to be agreed while strongly disagreed and disagreed are considered to be disagreed. Table 6 and 7 show the frequencies and percentages of the results that were obtained.

Table 6: Students Views on the Influence of Home Related Factors on School Attendance

Home Related Factors	SD		D		A		SA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Poverty	5	12.8	9	23.1	10	25.6	15	38.4
Value of education	20	51.3	11	28.2	4	10.3	4	10.3
Single parenting	17	43.6	9	23.1	6	15.4	7	17.9
Petty Trading	1	2.6	5	12.8	8	20.5	25	64.1
Laziness	21	53.8	9	23.1	7	17.9	2	5.1
Distance of school	13	3.3	11	28.2	8	20.5	7	17.9

Source: Fieldwork, 2013.

As shown in Table 6, 14 (25.9%) students disagreed that poverty is the cause of their low school attendance while 25 (64%) students agreed to the statement that poverty is a problem to their low school attendance. This finding is not different from that of Children Mental Health Treatment Research and Teaching Centre Notion (2011). It stated that poverty, even in intact families, is a factor that has implications for truancy. Besides, on a closer look at a study, 'the dilemma of primary school attendance in Nigeria' conducted in Nigeria by Iyamu and Obiunu (2006) revealed that poverty-related factors rank highly among the

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inhabitants in school attendance. Majority of the parents do not send their children to school owing to their poverty and inability to afford high cost of school materials and school fees. This finding also corroborates the views of Garrick and Celia (2000) that education in Africa is handicapped by the poverty of individuals and governments. Sperling and Rekha (2005) also say many families, especially those who are poor, cannot afford the cost of school fees, transportation, materials, or clothing for their children to attend school. Thus children perform other responsibilities in the home such as caring for younger siblings, house work, farming or trade which prevent them from attending school regularly. According to King and Hill (1992), under education is a cause of poverty. For a wide variety of reasons, under-educated parents, particularly women, are less able to see to it that that their children get the education they need. In Table 6 33 (84.6%) students agreed that petty trading causes students to absent themselves from school while 13 (33.3 %) of the students identified single parenting as a factor that causes low school attendance Twenty-four (61.5%) of the students disagreed to the notion that low school attendance is because the distance from home to school is far. The idea that perhaps students skip school because of laziness did not attract much attention as 30 of the students disagreed to the statement.

When students were asked to state other home related factors that affect their school attendance they mentioned fighting among their parents, too much house chores, menstrual pains on the part of girls, maltreatment by guardians,

playing with technological tools like phone, computer or viewing film, child labour and sleeping late.

Table 7: Parents' Views on Home Related Factors as a Cause of Low School Attendance

Home Related Factors	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Provision of School needs	21	61.8	13	38.2
Single parenting	15	44.1	19	55.9
Petty Trading	17	50.0	17	50.0
Laziness	13	38.2	21	61.8
School is Far	6	17.6	28	82.4
Inadequate Encouragement	2	61.8	13	38.2

Source: Fieldwork, 2013.

Most of the parents' categorically stated that they found it difficult to cater for the educational and personal needs of their children. When a child sees that his or her needs are not adequately provided for and thus find it relatively hard to obtain food and school materials in most cases he or she tends not to go to school.

As much as 21 (61.8%) parents indicated that they provided their children with school needs while 13 (38.2%) stated otherwise. Seventeen (50%) parents stated petty trading as the cause of low school attendance. The distance of the school was however not a problem because only 6 (17.6%) parents mentioned that the school was far from the children's home. As much as 21 (61.8%) parents said they did not encourage their children to go to school whiles 15 (44.1%) said they were single and found it difficult to cater for their children's school needs to enable them to attend school regularly. This finding also collaborates with

Sperling and Rekha (2005) which says many families, especially those who are poor, cannot afford the cost of school fees, transportation, materials, or clothing for their children to attend school. Thus children perform other responsibilities in the home such as caring for younger siblings, house work, farming or trade which prevent them from attending school regularly. According to King and Hill (1992), under education is a cause of poverty. For a wide variety of reasons, under-educated parents, particularly women, are less able to see to it that that their children get the education they need.However, Only 13 (38.2%) parents out of the 34 parents interviewed mentioned laziness as a cause of low school attendance.

When parents were asked to state other home related factors that affect their children's school attendance, they mentioned, pupils sleeping and waking up late, parents travelling and leaving children alone in the house to cater for themselves, children performing too much house chores, children's desire to play with friends at home, water shortage, baby sitting and parents paying much attention to their jobs to the neglect of their children.

School Related Factors

Research Question 2: What School Related Factors are Responsible for Low School Attendance among Junior High School Students?

Head teachers were asked to state their views on school related factors that cause low school attendance as Research Question 2 sought to solicit information on how the school contribute to low school attendance among pupils of junior high school. Table 8 shows their views.

Table 8: Head teachers' Views on School Related Factors as a Cause to Low School Attendance

School Related Factors	SD		D		A		SA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hostile environment/ relationship	2	15.4	0	0	8	61.5	3	23.1
Uninteresting and irrelevant curriculum	2	15.4	8	61.5	1	7.7	2	15.4
Bulling by friends	0	0	2	15.4	9	69.2	2	15.4
Inadequate teaching learning materials	0	0	3	23.1	7	53.8	3	23.1
Parents not encouraging their children to attend school	6	42.2	7	53.8	0	0	0	0
Poor academic performance	0	0	4	30.8	9	69.2	0	0
Illness	3	23.1	2	15.4	4	30.8	4	30.8
Low self image	0	0	2	15.4	10	76.9	1	7.7
Friends cause trouble	2	15.4	6	46.2	4	30.8	1	7.7
Sanctions	0	0	5	38.5	6	46.2	2	15.4

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

As shown in Table 8, 11 (84.6%) of the head teachers agreed that students had low self image/esteem that is why they sometimes stayed at home. The head teachers also agreed that children bullied one another. Eleven (84.6%) head teachers agreed to the statement that bullying by friends prevents children from coming to school always because students are afraid of those who bully them. Although there is little evidence to suggest a strong direct linkage between bullying and low attendance to school, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention study in the USA found that if bullying results in the victim becoming less engaged in school, that victim is more likely to cease attending and achieving (Seeley, Tombari, Bennett & Dunkle, 2011). Lowenstein (2003) opined that many pupils who are victims of bullying are afraid to go to school; they may suffer from poor attendance. They might be afraid to ride the school bus, use the bathroom at school. Table 8 also reveals that 11(84.6) of the head teachers agreed that hostile relationship between teachers and students made them stay away from school at times. This revelation is in line with Umme (2007) who said parents are of the opinion that schools are not particularly friendly towards very poor children especially if they do not have proper clothes, are not clean, not familiar with the need and importance of sending the child to school. He added parents have expressed that some teachers are very strict in dealing with their wards. In the same vein a study in the Irish context identified an impact of positive and negative interaction with teachers on students' perception of school and on attendance. Uninteresting and irrelevant curriculum as a cause of low school attendance attracted the least response as only 3 (23.1) head teachers

said yes when their opinion was sought. Head Teachers views on other school related factors responsible for low school attendance were poor sitting arrangement in the classroom, children inability to read, children unable to complete their home work, insufficient break time for students to play, absenteeism on the part of teachers, ineffective use of contact hours/instructional time.

Table 9: Teachers' View on School Related Factors as a Cause of Low School Attendance

School related factors	SD		D		A		SA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hostile relationship/environment	3	8.6	1	2.9	13	37.1	18	51.4
Uninteresting and irrelevant	8	22.9	18	51.4	7	20.0	2	5.7
Bullying by friends	2	5.7	7	20.0	19	54.3	7	20.0
Inadequate teaching/learning	5	14.3	10	28.6	15	42.9	5	14.3
Rewards do not encourage	15	42.9	12	34.3	4	11.4	4	11.4
Poor academic performance	2	5.7	10	28.6	21	60.0	2	5.7
Illness	1	2.9	4	14.4	22	62.9	8	22.9
Low self image	2	5.7	8	22.9	19	54.3	6	17.1
Friends cause trouble	2	5.7	12	34.3	13	37.1	8	22.9
Sanction	4	11.4	20	57.1	7	20.0	4	11.4

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

School as an institution is made up of teachers and students. The growth of the school depends largely on the relationship that exists among the individual teachers and pupils in the school. On the issue of teacher/student relationship in

the school system, teachers were asked to state their relationship with students and the results show that 31 (88.5%) out of thirty four teachers agreed that they had cordial relationship with their students. From the foregoing it is clear that a cordial relationship among students and teachers exited and should be encouraged as such because it ensures regular school attendance. This is supported by (Beck, 2012). He concluded that most students' absences were the results of academic weakness, followed by personal psychological problems and employment outside school. Kinder, Harland, Wilkin and Wakefield (1995) explored the relationship between attendance and school factors and found that as school size increase so did the absence rate. In addition it concluded that schools with lower teacher-student ratios had lower absence rate.

The responses gathered shows that out of the 35 teachers, 30 (85.8%) of them agreed that illness causes most pupils to stay away from school. To date, little research has focused directly on health related support in school. Yet increasing numbers of children are surviving illness and managing their conditions. Studies which have sought the views of children suggest that they have a number of problems managing school life. One UK study involving 40 children and young people with a variety of health conditions causing periods of absence from school drew attention of pupils concerns about the impact of absence on keeping up with school work and maintaining relationship with their peers (Bolton 1997). Teachers also identified bullying as the third cause to absenteeism as 27 (77.2%) teachers said they agreed. Twenty five (714%) of the teachers also admitted that low self image causes students to absent themselves

from school. A greater portion of the teachers as respondents stated that irrelevant and uninteresting curriculum is not the cause of students' irregularities in school as 26 (74.3%) disagreed.

When teachers were asked to state other school related factors that affect their students' school attendance, they mentioned boring classroom activities, tension or threat from some teachers, language barrier, no means of transport, teachers insulting pupils, classrooms not comfortable / unconducive, lack of recreational activities in schools, inadequate sanitary facilities for girls, children running too much errands for teachers, failure of teachers and head teachers to discipline pupils who are truants, insufficient individual teaching attention for truants and poor methods of teaching.

Table 10: Students Views on School Related Factors as a Cause of Low School Attendance

School Related Factors	SD		D		A		SA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cordial relationship	26	66.7	7	17.9	2	5.1	4	10.3
Inadequate T/L material	13	33.3	3	7.7	7	17.9	16	41.0
Uninteresting and								
Irrelevant curriculum	19	48.7	11	28.2	2	5.1	7	17.9
Bullying by friends	19	48.7	10	25.6	4	10.3	6	15.4
Corporal punishment	23	59.0	12	30.8	2	5.1	2	5.1
Academic weakness	22	56.4	11	28.2	3	7.7	3	7.7

Table 10 shows that the teachers were very serious with their professional work as 30 (76.9%) students disagreed to the statement that uninteresting and irrelevant curriculum is the cause of low attendance among students in the Elmina circuit. Bullying by friends was also identified by the students as one of the school factors that hinder their regular attendance to school. Ten (25.7%) students agreed that their friends bullied them a lot that was why they were afraid to come to school every day. Thirty three (84.6%) of the students mentioned that teachers did not relate well with them that was why they sometimes stayed away from school. As Umme (2007) said earlier parents are of the opinion that schools are not particularly friendly towards very poor children especially if they do not have proper clothes, are not clean, not familiar with the need and importance of sending the child to school. He added parents have expressed that some teachers are very strict in dealing with their wards. In the same vein a study in the Irish context identified an impact of positive and negative interaction with teachers on students' perception of school and on attendance. Corporal punishment attracted the least response as only 4 (15.4) of the students said they absented themselves from school because teachers caned them and as many as 35 (89.8%) disagreed that corporal punishment in school prevented them from coming to school always. This response is in line with Furlog (1985) who places the responsibility of pupils' behaviour on the parents while the school accepts no responsibility for their behaviour. The school has no adverse effect on low school attendance since punishments are carefully administered. Some negative behaviour like rudeness and insubordination require some strong measures to make these deviant comply.

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These behaviour make pupils develop antiauthority outlook and consequently become truants. In some schools teachers have little patience towards pupils' with such behaviour.

When students were asked to mention other school related factors responsible for students low school attendance, they mentioned, teachers insulting students unnecessarily, hard rules/difficult rules given by the head teachers, too many subjects taught in a day, no computers to motivate students, poor teaching methods, teachers charging fees for extra classes, teachers leaving school before school closes, students being afraid of some of the teachers and children's' inability to complete their home work.

Research Question 3: What Peer / Child Related Factors are Responsible for Low School Attendance among Junior High School Students

As discussed earlier under the literature review. Peer pressure occurs when an individual experiences impl1ied or expressed persuasion to adopt similar values, beliefs and goals, or to participate in the activities as those in the peer group. Peer relationship become richer and more complicated in middle childhood. According to Tyerman (1968) the child does not know the difference between right and wrong, he or she learns this from mates in school, the neighbourhood and the general community. Also Thompson (2007), said the nature of friendship chances in middle childhood to incorporate philological closeness as well as share activities and friendships thus become more intense and exclusive. Children create a small circle of close friends and are more upset when friendship ends. Friendships also coalesce into larger peer groups or clubs with

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their own norms for dress, vocabulary, hair styles, and activities and behaviour.

Elmina is a place where a lot of trading, fishing activities and peer influences

exist. In the light of these children, parents and teachers were asked to state the

activities that children engaged in and how their friends influenced them.

to stay away from school. The results are shown in Table 11, 12 and 13.

Table 11: Head Teachers Views about Peer/Child Related Factor as a Cause of Low School Attendance

Peer /child himself factors	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Bullying/Teasing	11	84.6	2	15.4
Poor academic performance	12	92.3	1	7.7
My friend absent himself from school	6	46.2	7	53.8
Illness	9	69.2	4	30.8

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Head teachers were also asked to indicate the cause of low school

attendance and the results are shown in Table 11. It is very clear from the table

that poor academic performance was the major cause of low school attendance.

According to 92% of the head teachers, poor academic performance was the

cause of low school attendance. Kirt and Gallagher (1996) think that the direction

in talents and gifts influence academic performance, and more depends on several

factors such as experience, motivation, interest and self concept. When a child is

lacking most of these factors he or she begins to play truancy in school. Bullying

by friends was seen as the second cause to pupils playing truancy because

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11(84.6%) of the head teachers indicated 'yes'. McDougall, Vaillancourt and Hymel (2003) pointed out in their study that physical and emotional consequences of being a victim of bullying can be severe. They added that children who are bullied are at a greater risk of depression and lower self-esteem later in life, more likely to report migraine and non-migraine, headaches, prone to missing more school because of excused and unexcused absences, are at higher risk for running away from home, more likely to have problems with alcohol and drug use. As much as 9 (69.2%) headteachers stated that illness among students prevented them from coming to school always, where as 6 (46,2%) stated that students sometimes stayed away from school because their friends stayed away from school.

When headteachers were asked to state other peer/ child related factors, they stated emotional disturbances, stress and tiredness, desire to use technological instruments, interest to play football, no means of transport and students inability to complete home work.

Table 12: Teacher Views about Peer/Child Himself Related Factor as a Cause to Low School Attendance

Peer /Child Factors	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Bullying/Teasing	28	80.0	7	20.0
Poor academic performance	23	65.7	12	34.3
My friend absent himself	18	51.4	17	48.6
Illness	28	80.0	7	20.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

The causes of low school attendance among students in junior high school in Table 12 as identified by the teachers show that bullying by friends is a dominant factor because 28 (80.0%) of the teachers answered yes when they were asked to indicate the cause of the problem. This is true because, The Anti-Bullying centre in Dublin made it clear that national and international research has shown that bullies know no boundaries of age, sex or socio-economic background. It can take many forms, it can be short term, or continue over long periods, even years. The powers of concentration of victims can suffer adversely affecting their capacity for learning and anxiety about going to school. They further identified illness to be of equal cause to low school attendance as 28 (80.0%) of the teachers stated yes. Pourat, and Gina (2009) in their study on 'Unaffordable Dental Care Is Linked to Frequent School Absences' confirms this as they mentioned that tooth decay is the single most common chronic disease of childhood and affects nearly 60 percent of children in the United States. In 2007, approximately 7 percent of school-age children in California missed at least one day of school due to a dental problem. The ability to afford needed care is the key difference between those children who miss school and those who do not. This report examines the link between unaffordable dental care and missed school days, especially among children who are uninsured, lower-income, limited English-proficient, Asian American, and who have poor oral health. Children lose approximately fifty million school hours each year to dental related illness and low income children lose twelve times as much. This tells us that other health

relate problems such as malaria, cholera, asthma equally affect the attendance of pupils to school.

Twenty three (65.7%) of them indicated poor academic performance as a cause. The lowest factor that causes low school attendance according to them is pupils' friends absent themselves from school that is why they also stay away from school. Eighteen of the teachers supported the idea. Teachers stated students with disabilities, disrespect for teachers, teenage pregnancy, too much house chores, over age or under age and being in junior high school and poor sitting arrangement in the class as other peer/ child related factors responsible for low school attendance among the students.

Table 13: Student's Views on Peer/Child Related Factor responsible for Low School Attendance

Child/ peer relation factor	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Bullying	30	76.9	9	23
Poor academic performance	7	17.9	32	82.1
Illness	17	43.6	22	87.2
Self esteem	5	12.8	34	87.2
Friends cause trouble	5	12.8	34	87.2
My friend stay away	1	2.6	38	97.4

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Bullying as a peer related factor responsible for low school attendance is really a problem. A total number of 30 (76.9%) students stated that bullying by friends prevented them from coming to school always. This is really a problem in

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societies these days and schools are also victims. Their observation and experiences is being supported by many writers as Bullying among school-aged youth is increasingly being recognized as an important problem affecting well-being and social functioning. While a certain amount of conflict and harassment is typical of youth peer relations, bullying presents a potentially more serious threat to healthy youth development.

Bullying is characterised by an individual behaving in a certain way to gain power over another person. A 2012 paper from the Berkman Center, An Overview of State Anti-Bullying Legislation and Other Related Laws, acknowledged that bullies often target their victims based on 'creed, religion, disability, gender or sex, nationality or national origin, race and sexual orientation. 'It grouped bullying into three basic types, thus abuse emotional, physical and verbal. National Centre for Education Statistics suggests that bullying can be classified into two categories that is to say direct and indirect bullying. Ross (1996) also states that direct bullying involves a great deal of physical aggression, such as shoving and poking, throwing things, slapping, choking, punching and kicking, beating, stabbing, pulling hair, scratching, biting, scraping, and pinching. He also suggests indirect bullying is characterised by attempting to socially isolate the victim. This isolation is achieved through a wide variety of techniques, including spreading gossip, refusing to socialise with the victim, bullying other people who wish to socialise with the victim, and criticizing the victim's manner of dress and socially significant makers like the victim's race, religion, disability, sex, or sexual preference. Seven (17.9%)

students said they mostly stayed away from school because they easily got sick especially in the raining season. Five (12.8%) students mentioned low self image as a cause to their low attendance to school. One (2.6 %) however confessed that he had a friend who did not like going to school always and that attitude had influenced him. This student confession is in line with (Geser, 2007) who said that attendance is also related to attitudes towards, and opinions of, peers and classmates.

Students stated waking up late from bed and feeling they will be late for school, scoring zero in mathematics and teachers caning them, friends not valuing them, the fear that teachers will cane them when home work is left undone, playing ball and computer games as other peer/student related factors responsible for low school attendance.

Research Question 4: How Does Low School Attendance Affect the Academic Performance of Junior High School Students?

This question was posed to examine how low school attendance affects the academic performance of junior high school students. A test of Pearson correlation was further conducted to investigate the effect of low school attendance on the academic performance of junior high school students. The results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Correlation Matrix of Low School Attendance and Students'
Performance

Pearson Correlation		performance	School Attendance
Performance	Pearson correlation	1.00	.82
	Sig (2-tailed)		.001
	N	39	39
School Attendance	Pearson Correlation	.82	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed	.001	
		39	39

Correlation is significant at .05 (2-tailed).

The results as indicated in Table 14 show that there was a significant relationship between low school attendance and students academic performance in junior high schools. (r =.82; p < .05; N=39). This implies that low school attendance has a positive influence on the level of students' academic performance in Elmina Circuit. Also the more students fail to come to school the poorer the performance. .

Besides the results indicated in table 14 show that the correlation coefficient of determination is $r^2 = (.82)^2 = .67$ which means that 67 percent of the students academic performance is influence by school attendance. Thus more than half of a student's academic performance is influence by school attendance. Thirty three percent of students' academic performance is determined by other unexplained factors. This finding is consistent with the view that the higher the absences, the

higher the effect on the academic performance (Gay, Cooney, O'Connor & Small, 2007).The problem of absenteeism is becoming the concern of every member of society since it has negative consequences at both the individual and social level. For instance, studies carried by Wadesango and Machingambi (2011) have established that students who attend classes more regularly seem to be more successful in their studies than those who frequently absent themselves. In a related study, Baldacchino and Farrugia (2002) examined the relationship between class attendance and performance in the context of agricultural economics classes and confirmed that student absenteeism resulted in lower grades. Marburger (2001) also reported a carefully designed study of attendance and test performance among university students in South Sajar. Students were significantly more likely to answer incorrectly those test questions covering material taught during days on which the students were absent. Contributing to the same debate, Reid (2005) postulates that when students are absent from school, there are a wide range of short term educational consequences that they face. First and foremost, students miss out on assignments. By missing out on assignments, they are more likely to underachieve or perform poorly in different subjects.

Research Question 5: Measures to Minimize Low School Attendance

There are various initiatives and interventions addressing low school attendance. These vary from school to school. This section explores some of the attempts made to address the issue of low attendance in basic schools. Reviewing some of the existing initiatives it was evident that schools have a major role in

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promoting and monitoring school attendance. In terms of different monitoring devices, measures such as periodic report or register; daily report or register; weekly report or register; student-kept journals and computerised record-keeping used by the schools in their attempt to address the issue. To gain a better understanding of the problem head teachers, teachers and parents were asked to state some of the measures that can be used to minimise low school attendance in junior high schools.

Table 15: Head Teacher's Views on Measures to Minimize Low School Attendance

Measures to minimize low school attendance	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Frequent marking of class attendance register	7	53.8	6	46.2
Schools partnership with parents	12	92.3	1	7.7
Providing financial support	11	84.6	2	15.4
Cordial relationship	10	76.9	3	23.1
Penalties on parents	5	38.5	8	61.5
Effective education	9	69.2	4	30.8

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

As shown in Table 15, 12 (92.3%) head teachers indicated that schools working in partnership with parents will help reduce low school attendance among junior high school pupils. Head teachers who indicated this were the majority as shown in Table 15. As previously found by Children Mental Health Treatment Research and Teaching Centre (2011), successful programmes to deal with truancy are seldom limited to the classroom alone. The home and the

community are at least as important as the school in battling this problem. Communities in which anti-truancy programmes have been successful use a combination of incentives (reward) and sanctions (negative consequences) to keep students in school. Sometimes these programmes lead to helpful resources for the family as a whole. Also Railsback (2004) suggested that Attendance Reduction Demonstration Programme to address low attendance or poor attendance has to include certain key components involving schools, families, communities and outside agencies. The key components to be included are: consistent policies and practices, which keep children in school, rather than pushing them out involve families in all programme planning and implementation, there must be mutual trust and communication for families and schools to work together to solve problems, provide a continuum of support to students, including meaningful incentives and consequences.

Providing financial support was also seen as a second serious measure to minimise low school attendance as 11 (84.6%) out of the 13 head teachers answe red 'yes' when they were asked whether providing financial support to pupils who absent themselves from school will help minimise the situation. Also 10 (79.9%) of the headteachers indicated cordial relationship among teachers and students as another effective way of minimising truancy among students. Nine (69.2%) of them indicated 'yes' when they were further asked whether educating parents on the importance of education will help minimise low school attendance among students. Penalty on parents whose children are truants attracted the least

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response as only 5 out of the 13 headteachers saw the need for it as a way of reducing truancy.

When headteachers were also asked to indicate other measures to minimise low school attendance. They suggested that parents should visit their children in school regularly, government should provide more text books and furniture for junior high schools in the Elmina Circuit, capitation grant should be given to school on time, government should give cash award to students who are regular in school at the end of each academic year, individual attention should be given to pupils with academic problems, teachers should be motivated enough to be regular in school for children to imitate, philanthropists and other rich parents in society should support truants who are poor financially, government should ban children who are less than eighteen years from fishing and involving in petty trading, both teachers and parents should supervise pupils closely and that teachers should make their lessons more practical and child centred.

Table 16: Teachers' Views on Measures to Minimise Low School Attendance

Measures to minimise low school attendance	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Frequent marking of class attendance reg.	10	28.6	25	71.4
Schools partnership with parents	22	62.9	13	37.1
Providing financial support	30	85.7	5	14.3
Cordial relationship	32	91.4	3	8.6
Penalties on parents	26	74.3	9	25.7
Effective education	26	74.3	9	25.7

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

The data in Table 16 reveals that 32 (91.4%) of the teachers asserted that teachers having cordial relationship with pupils will help minimise low school attendance. This is in line with what an inter city study conducted by Umme (2007) which stated that schools are not particularly friendly towards very poor children especially if they do not have proper clothes, are not clean, not familiar with the need and importance of sending the child to school. Providing financial support to pupils with financial difficulties was seen as the next line of action that the teachers identified as a measure that will help reduce absenteeism among pupils as 30 representing (85.7%) answered 'yes' when their opinions were sought. Aside this, Table 16 also shows that penalising parents whose children are found to be truants will help minimise low school attendance as 26 teachers indicated yes. An equal number of 26 (74.3%) teachers as respondents also indicated yes to educating parents on the need for their children to attend school regularly as a measure to minimise truancy. Frequent marking of class attendance register attracted the least responses as 10 (28, 6%) stated yes when their opinions were sought while. 25 of the teachers did not support the idea.

When teachers were asked to state other measures to minimise low school attendance they stated that teachers should be provided accommodation near the schools they teach, cash incentives for teachers in junior high schools , reduction of subject areas at the junior high school level, assign truants responsibilities and duties, head teachers should reward students who are regular to serve as a motivation to students who are truants , guidance and counselling services should be effective, students' needs in the classroom should be attended to, teachers and

head teachers should serve as role model by coming to school always, government, philanthropist, local government and municipal assemblies should collaborate and provide means of transport for students' For example a bus to convey students or a bicycle for each student to ride in and out, also suggested structures should be put up in schools by the government and Parents Teacher Association, and that parents and teachers' supervision should be intensified.

Table 17: Parents' Views on Measures to Minimize Low School Attendance

Measures to minimize low school attendance	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Frequent marking of class attendance reg.	12	35.3	22	64.7
Schools partnership with parents	23	67.6	11	32.4
Providing financial support	30	88.2	4	11.8
Cordial relationship	32	94.1	2	5.8
Penalties on parents	17	50.0	17	50.0
Effective education	25	73.5	9	26.5

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

When parents were interviewed using the interview guide to tell which of the measures can help minimise low school attendance 32 representing (94.1%) responded that teachers having cordial relationship with children is an effective tool to be used. Their reason is that children will feel at home and more secured and will also like to be in school. Thirty (88.2%) parents stated that apart from cordial relationship between teachers and pupils providing financial support will go a long way to promote regular school attendance among junior high school

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pupils. In a similar view Sperling and Rekha (2005) say many families, especially those who are poor, cannot afford the cost of school fees, transportation, materials, or clothing for their children to attend school. They added lack of or low level of formal education is a cause of poverty. For a wide variety of reasons, under-educated parents, particularly women, are less able to see to it that that their children get the education they need. Many parents seem not to know the importance of being regular in school so it was not surprising that 25 (73.5%) of the parents suggested that educating their colleagues on the importance of education and the need for their children to be in school always will help minimise low school attendance among students. Frequent marking of class attendance register attracted the least yes response as only 12(35.3%) out of the 34 parents asserted 'yes'.

Parents suggested other measures to minimise low school attendance as: Government should provide means of transport for instance buses to send children to and from school as most private schools do; the government should extend the school feeding programme to junior high schools; Guidance and counselling services should be intensified in junior high schools. Parents and teachers should deny children what they cherish most if they play truancy; Government schools should be well equipped with science laboratories, computer laboratories, canteens and libraries to motivate children to come to school always.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The degree to which junior high school students absent themselves from school is due to multiple factors.. It is not only poverty that hinders students' regular attendance, but failure can also originate from other factors. Consequently, this study sought to find out the factors responsible for low school attendance among junior high school students. This final chapter seeks to present a summary of the research process as well as the key findings that emerged from the research. The chapter also contains the conclusions and recommendations that were made based on the findings of the study. Regarding the findings of the study, I have also suggested a number of areas for further research studies to be carried out.

Summary

The study was primarily designed to examine the factors responsible for low school attendance and their effects on the academic performance of junior high school students in Elmina circuit of Komenda Edina Eguafo, Abrem municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. A descriptive survey design was adopted as the study design and the target group for the study comprised head teachers, teachers, parents and pupils of the Komenda, Edina, Eguafo and Abrem municipality. The sample for the study consisted of 130 respondents selected

using the purposive sampling technique. It was made up of 39 teachers, 39 students and 39 parents and 13 head teachers. Three class teachers in each school were used and 1 student who had the lowest total attendance in each class was considered with their parents or guardians. One head teacher from each school was also selected for the study.

Self-developed questionnaires were used to collect data from the teachers, students and the head teachers while an interview guide was used to collect data from the parents or guardians. Records were also used to identify students with the lowest total attendance and to determine the effect of low school attendance on their academic performance. Research instruments were validated through expert judgment, pilot-tested and used as the instruments for data collection. Due to the descriptive nature of the study, descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and Pearson correlation) were used to analyze the quantitative data that were collected while data collected from the opened ended questions were stated as other factors responsible for low school attendance.

Key Findings

The essential findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. An overwhelming majority of the respondents rated low school attendance as a great problem. The parents agreed that the major home related factors responsible for low school attendance were poverty. A significant proportion of 21 (61.8%) parents asserted to this.. Students also agreed with the statement that poverty is a cause to low school attendance among junior high

school students. Thirty three students agreed that they mostly engage in petty trading and fishing instead of being in school.

2. The study revealed that the school related factors that make students to avoid school most of the times is low self image and bullying as identified by teachers and Headteachers. Thirty teachers agreed that illness also made children to absent themselves from school. However teachers did not see hostile school environment as a cause of low school attendance. Besides, sixty percent of the students indicated that poor facilities are a cause of their stay at home.

3. Twelve head teachers strongly acknowledged that poor academic performance causes students to stay away from school. They added bullying among students themselves as a second cause. Teachers and students identified bullying and sicknesses as peer/child related factors that prevent students from being regular in school. However only 1 (2.6%) said he mostly stays away from school because his friend does not go to school always.

4. The study revealed there was a highly positive significant relationship between low school attendance and students academic performance in junior high schools. (r =.82; p < .005; N=39). This implies that low school attendance has a positive influence on the level of students' academic performance in Elmina Circuit. Also the coefficient of determination, $r^2 = (.82)^2 = .67$ in the study reveals that more than half of a student academic performance is influence by school attendance. This finding is consistent with

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the view that the higher the absences, the higher the effect on the academic performance.

5. School working in partnership with parents was seen as great measure to help reduce low school attendance. Also providing financial support to parents' .and teachers having cordial relationship with their students will help children to go to school always.

Other school related factors responsible for low school attendance which were commonly mentioned among parents and students are pupils sleeping late and waking up late from bed, students performing too much house chores. Head teachers, teachers and students also stated pupils' inability to complete their home work, unfriendly classrooms, ineffective use of contact hours and inadequate motivation for students.

Again head teachers, teachers, and parents all saw banning children under eighteen years from petty trading and fishing, parents and teachers should supervise children more closely than before and that schools should reward or government should give scholarship to pupils who are regular in school to serve as motivation to other pupils as ways that can help minimise low school attendance among junior high school students in the areas.

Conclusions

Based on the critical analyses of the data it was observed that the findings in most cases, confirmed the research questions posed. For instance, it was seen that, the home related factors played an integral part in the promotion of low attendance to school among junior high school students. Poverty makes parents

unable to cater for their wards well both at home and in school. Some students also gave the impression that their teachers do not relate well with them, some stated that their schools have poor facilities and that the curriculum was not interesting.

Students also gave the reason that their parents had no money to cater for them in school. In sum, it was found that, the home, the school and peer/child are the greatest contributory factors responsible for low school attendance among junior high school students. It is deduced that due to the financial problem of parents, only a few children can be sent to school, and that illiteracy rate could increase in the area under study leading to people being jobless. This can also increase social vices like stealing, arm robbery, prostitution, making the area very unsafe to live in. Students who are also bullied in school sometimes stay away from school. It is deduced that if children cannot bear all these they will continue to stay away from school and at the end drop out of school. Also one of the conclusions drawn from the study is that there is very high incidence of low academic performance in internal examinations as indicated in the correlation coefficient of determination and this is clear indication that students will not perform well in their external examinations thus the basic education certificate examinations. The tendency of low school attendance among junior high school students will increase in the area hence the effort to minimise low school attendance among junior high school students may not be achieved.

Recommendations

From all indications, low school attendance among junior high school students is a problem with multiple causes, and it requires solutions from all stakeholders in order to curb it. The three institutions (the home, the school and the peer/ child) need to take up the matter seriously and find lasting solutions to it. With regards to the findings of the study, I made the following recommendations.

1. The government through the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service should make adequate budgetary allocation available to every school and supply the schools with the appropriate teaching-learning materials to accomplish effective teaching and learning in junior high schools. This will necessitate the setting up of science laboratories in the various schools. And where funds are readily available, school administration will be in better position to procure other necessary instructional materials which will facilitate the implementation of junior high schools curriculum.

2. On the socio-economic state of the children (poverty), there is the need for a concerted effort by both governmental and non-governmental agencies to help in solving the problem.

3. Parents should be helped to acquire some additional skills such as bread baking, hairdressing, dressmaking/ tailoring etc. The concept of credit unions should be instilled in parents so as to make funds accessible to them to enable them earn additional income to supplement their meagre income. With this, they would be able to look after their children.

4. The District Assemblies, other Government Agencies and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should make funds available to assist the less privileged students to attend school regularly.

5. Teachers should be given training in guidance and counselling, purposely on how to handle truants and students who are bullies. It is believed that if teachers were given such skills, it would help to shape pupils behaviour.

6. Students who are bullies in schools should be punished severely, suspended and dismissed depending on the degree of the bully anytime they put up such behaviour.

7. Headteachers of junior high schools should establish standing committees known as "Attendance Enforcement Committee" of which the head should be a member. The objective of this committee is to ensure regular attendance in schools. It should be charged with the duties of developing strategies for persuading students to maintain regular school attendance.

8. Schools, Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem municipal and the government should ban children of school going age from fishing and petty trading and also give pupils who are regular in school cash reward.

It is my hope that if much attention is given to these recommendations made, students' low attendance to school will be reduced in the area under review. It would also serve as a basis for resolving this prevalent problem in the country.

Areas for Further Research

1. Researchers who have interest in this same topic and would like to investigate it in the near future are encouraged to choose other geographical areas as their case study rather than Elmina circuit in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem municipality where it has been undertaken.

2. Since the topic low attendance to school falls under the big umbrella of social vices, it is also recommended that future researchers look at other social vices in the Elmina community and the influence they have on the children's education.

3. A comparative study of low school attendance between students in urban and rural schools in the country should also be conducted.

4. Comparative study of low school attendance in private basic schools and public basic schools.

5. Teachers' absenteeism and its effect on the academic performance of junior high schools students.

6. Low school attendance and its effect among kindergarten pupils.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

AN INTRODUCTION LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

Telephone No.: 0332133379

Cables: PED, University, Cape Coast
E-mail: dbeucc@yahoo.com

University of Cape Coast
UCC Post Office
Cape Coast

Our Ref.: DBE/14/V.6/144

10th April, 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The bearer of this letter **Linda Lamisi Ayingura (ED/BEP/11/0004)** is a level 600 student at the Department of Basic Education, University of Cape Coast.

She is undertaking a study on **"Low School Attendance and its Effect on the Academic Performance of Junior High School Pupils in Elmina Circuit"**. In connection with this, she needs to collect data.

The study is academic in purpose and data collected will be treated as confidential. We should, therefore, be grateful if you could give her the necessary assistance.

Yours faithfully,

C. K. Agezo (Ph.D)
(Head)

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APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS ON LOW SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information on factors that are responsible for low attendance to school among Junior High School pupils in the Elmina Circuit. You will be contributing immensely to the success of this study by answering this questionnaire as honestly as possible. All information provided would be used for academic purpose. You are assured of confidentially. Please provide the information by ticking in the box where necessary.

SECTION A

Biographical Data

1. Name of school………………………………………………………

2. Class……………………………………………………………………

3. Gender   Male [   ]   Female [   ]

4. Age (years)   12- 13yrs [   ]   14-15yrs [   ]   16-17yrs [   ]   18-19 yrs [   ] above 19yrs [   ].

SECTION B

Home Related Factors Responsible for Low School Attendance

among Junior High School Pupils

Please answer Strongly Disagree (SD), or Disagree (D), and or Strongly Agree (SA) or Agree (A) by ticking [√] in the box where necessary to reflect your opinion on home related factors responsible for low school attendance.

Home Related factors	S D	D	A	S A
5. Poverty prevents me from coming to school always.				
6. My parents do not value education.				
7. My school needs are not provided because I live with my mother /father alone.				
8. Distance to school is far.				
9. I involve in petty trading/ fishing.				
10. I do not feel like going to school always.				

11. Indicate other home-related factors that are responsible for low school attendance in your school.

    i.   ....

    ii.   ....

    iii.   ....

    iv.   ....

    v.   ....

SECTION C

School Related Factors Responsible for Low School Attendance among

Junior High Schools Pupils

Please answer Strongly Disagree (SD), or Disagree (D), and or Strongly Agree (SA) or Agree (A) by ticking in the box where necessary to reflect your opinion on school related factors responsible for low school attendance.

School Related Factors	SD	D	SA	A
12. My teacher does not like me.				
13. My school has not got enough teaching /learning materials.				
14. I am not interested in the subjects that are taught in my school.				
15. My friends bully me.				
16. I am always punished at school unnecessarily.				
17. I am academically weak.				

18. Indicate other school related factors that are responsible for low school attendance in your school.

    i.   ....

    ii.   ....

    iii.   ....

    iv.   ....

    v.   ....

SECTION D

Peer/Child himself Related Factors Responsible for Low School

Attendance among Junior High School Pupils

Please answer yes or no by ticking in the appropriate box to indicate your opinion on peer related/ child himself factors responsible for low school attendance.

Peer related and child himself factors	Yes	No
19. Do bullying /teasing from your friend prevent you from coming to school?		
20. Do you stay away from school because your friends also stay away from school?		
21. Does poor academic performance discourage you from Coming to school always?		
22. Does illness prevent you from coming to school always		
23. Does low self image/ self-esteem prevent you from coming to school?		
24. Do friends who cause trouble in school prevent you from coming to school?		

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25. Please indicate other peer/ child himself related factors responsible for low school attendance in your school.

    i.   ....

    ii.   ....

    iii.   ....

    iv.   ....
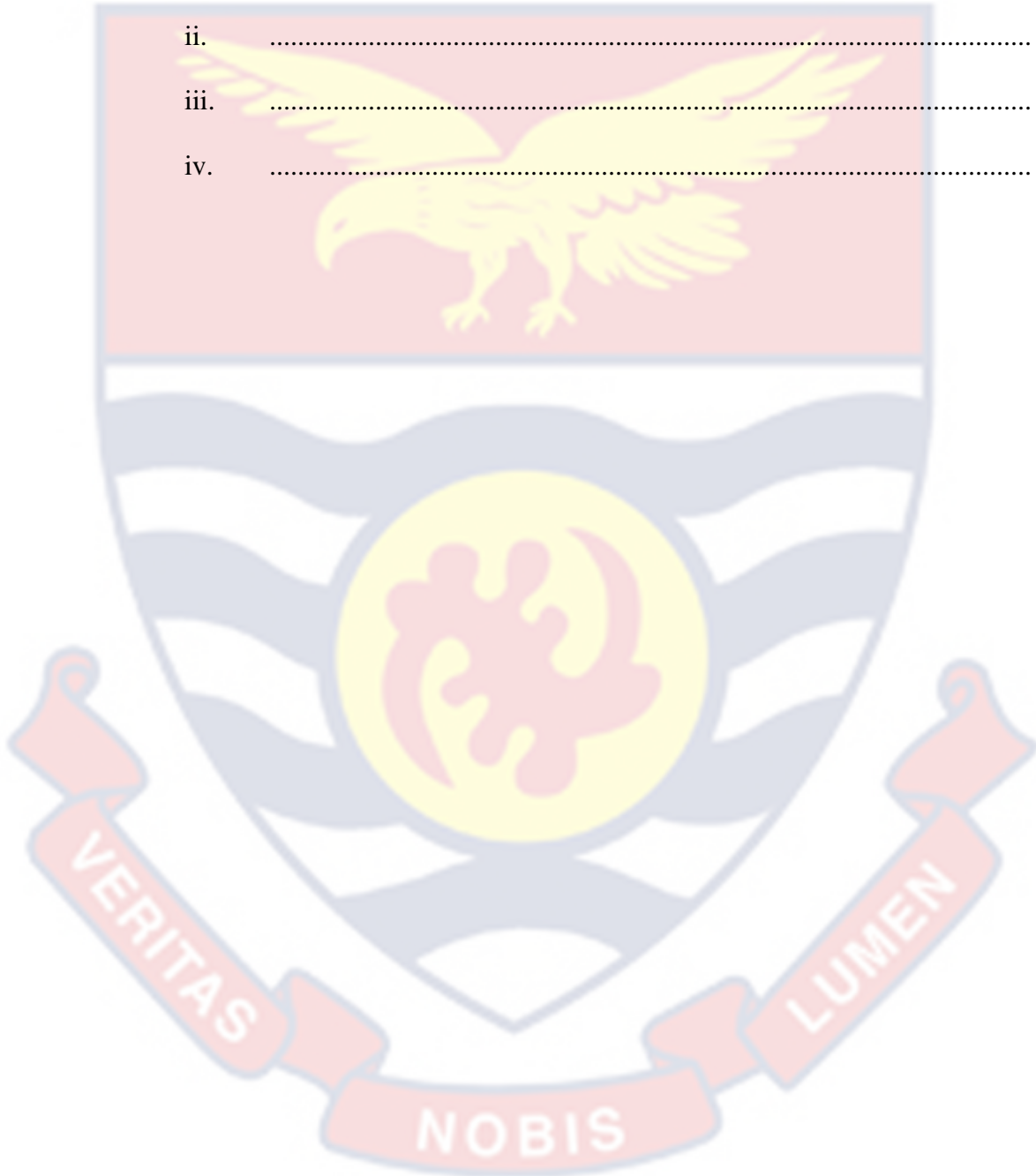
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS ON LOW

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS

The purpose of this interview guide is to collect information on low attendance to school among Junior High School pupils in the Elmina circuit. Please provide every piece of information as objectively as possible. All responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

SECTION A

Biographical Data

1. Gender :   Male   [   ]   Female   [   ]

2. Age (Years) 20-24yrs[   ]   25-29yrs[   ]   30-34yrs[   ]   40 and above[   ]

3. Marital Status   Single[   ]   Married [   ] Divorced [   ] Windowed [   ]

Others specify…………………………………………………………

4. Educational background: Illiterate [   ]   MSLC [   ]   Cert A [   ]

    Diploma [   ]

Bachelors Degree [   ]   Master's Degree [   ]

Others

specify…………………………………………………………….......

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SECTION   B

Home Related Factors Responsible for Low School Attendance among

Junior High School Pupils

Please answer yes or no to indicate which of the following factors can be considered as home related factors that cause low attendance to school among Junior High School pupils.

Home Factors	Yes	No
5. Do you provide your child's school needs?		
6. Does your being a single parent affect your child's regular attendance to school?		
7. Does your child involvement in petty trading prevent him /her from going to school always?		
8. Does your child sometimes feel like not going to school?		
9. Does your child absent himself/herself from school because the school is far?		
10. Do you encourage your child to go to school every day?		

11. What other home related factors do you think prevent your child from attending school regularly?

i. ....

ii. ....

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SECTION C

Measures to minimize low school attendance among Junior High School Students

12. Can marking the class attendance register twice a day prevent pupils from absenting themselves from school?

a) Yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

If yes why and If no why

13. In your opinion, can schools working in partnership with parents reduce pupils low attendance to school?

a) Yes [   ]   b) No   [   ]

If   yes   why   and   if   No why...

14. Can providing financial support to pupils with financial problems help reduce truancy?

a) Yes [   ] b) No [   ]

If   Yes   why   and   if   No why...

15. Can cordial relationship between teachers and pupils motivate pupils to attend school regularly?

a) Yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

If yes why and if No why...

16. Can penalties on parents whose children stay away from school help reduce the incidence of low school attendance?

a) yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

If yes why and if No why...

17. Can effective education on the need of child's education help minimise low school attendance?

   a) Yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

       If yes why and if No why...

18. Please what other measures can help minimise low school attendance among Junior High School pupils in your area?

   i.   ....

   ii.   ....

   iii. ....

   iv.   ....

   v.   ....

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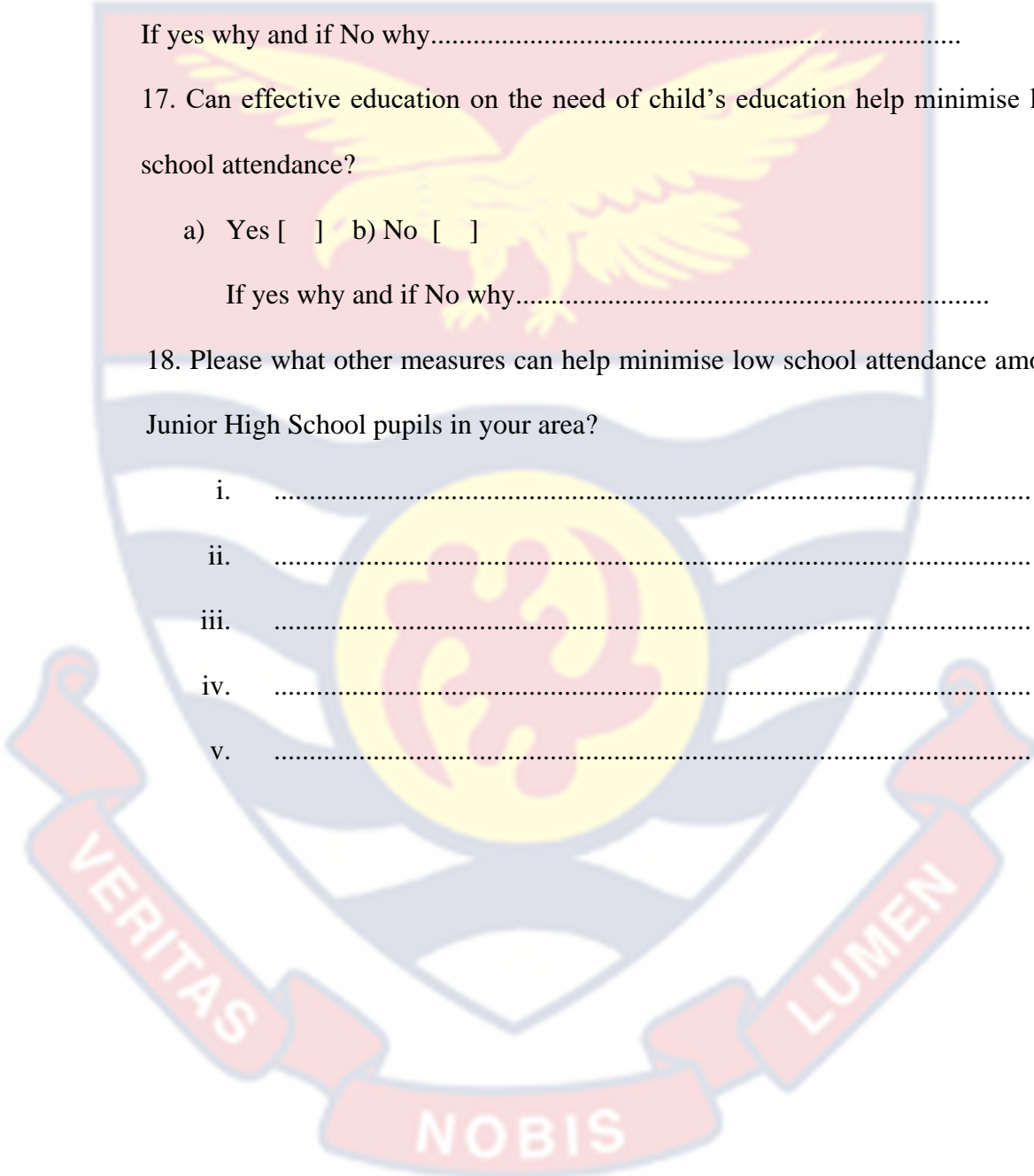
APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADTEACHERS AND ON LOW SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information on low attendance to school among Junior High School pupils in the Elmina circuit. Please provide every piece of information as objectively and independently as possible. All responses will be treated with confidentiality.

SECTION A

Biographical Data

Please provide the necessary information by ticking in the box where necessary. For others you may specify by writing in the free spaces provided.

1. Name of school...

2. Gender :   Male [   ]   Female[   ]

3. Age/ years: 20-24yrs[ ]   25-29yrs[ ]   30-34yrs[ ]   35-39yrs[ ]   40 and above[ ]

4. Marital Status   Single [   ]   Married [   ] Divorced [   ] Windowed [   ]

Others specify……………………………………………………………............

5. Educational Background: MSLC [   ]   Cert A [   ]   Diploma [   ]

Bachelor Degree [   ]   Masters Degree [   ]

6. Others specify…………………………………………………………

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SECTION B

School Related Factors Responsible for Low School Attendance among Junior High School Students.

Please answer Strongly Disagree (SD), or Disagree (D), and or Strongly Agree (SA) or Agree (A) by ticking in the box where necessary to reflect your

School Related Factors	S D	D	A	S A
7. I have cordial relationship with my pupi.ls.				
8. Curriculum is uninteresting and irrelevant				
9. Bullying by friends prevent children from coming to school regularly.				
10. The school has inadequate Teaching/learning materials.				
11. Rewards do not encourage children to come to school.				
12. Poor academic performance discourages children from Coming to school always.				
13. Illnesses prevent children from coming to school always.				
14. Low self image/ self-esteem prevent pupils from coming to school always.				
15. Friends who cause trouble in school prevent other children from coming to always.				
16. Sanctions do not deter children from staying away from school.				

17. Please indicate other school related factors that are responsible for low school attendance in your school:

   i.   ....

   ii.   ....

   iii.   ....

   iv.   ....

   v.   ....

SECTION C

Peer / Child Related Factors Responsible For Low School Attendance

Please answer yes or no by ticking in the box to indicate your opinion on peer related / child himself factors responsible for low school attendance.

Peer / Child Himself Related Factors	Yes	No
18. Does teasing / bullying from friends prevent pupils from coming to school?		
19. Do children with weak academic performance stay away from school?		
20. Do children stay away from school because their friends do that?		

21. Indicate other peer / child himself related factors that are responsible for low school attendance in your school.

i..

135

ii...

iii...

iv..

SECTION D

Measures to minimize low school attendance among Junior High School pupils

22. Can marking the class attendance register twice a day prevent pupils from absenting themselves from school?

a) Yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

If yes why and If no why

23. In your opinion, can schools working in partnership with parents reduce pupils low attendance to school?

a) Yes [   ]   b) No   [   ]

If yes why and if No

why...

24. Can providing financial support to pupils with financial problems help reduce truancy?

b) Yes [   ] b) No [   ]

If Yes why and if no why..

25. Can cordial relationship between teachers and pupils motivate pupils to attend school regularly?

a) Yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

If yes why and if No why..

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26. Can penalties on parents whose children stay away from school help reduce the incidence of low school attendance?

a) Yes [   ] b) No [   ]

If yes why and if No why...

27. Can effective education on the need of child's education help minimise low school attendance?

b) Yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

If yes why and if No why..

28. Please what other measures can help minimise low school attendance among Junior High School pupils in your area?

vi.   ....

vii.   ....

viii.   ....

ix.   ....

x.   ....

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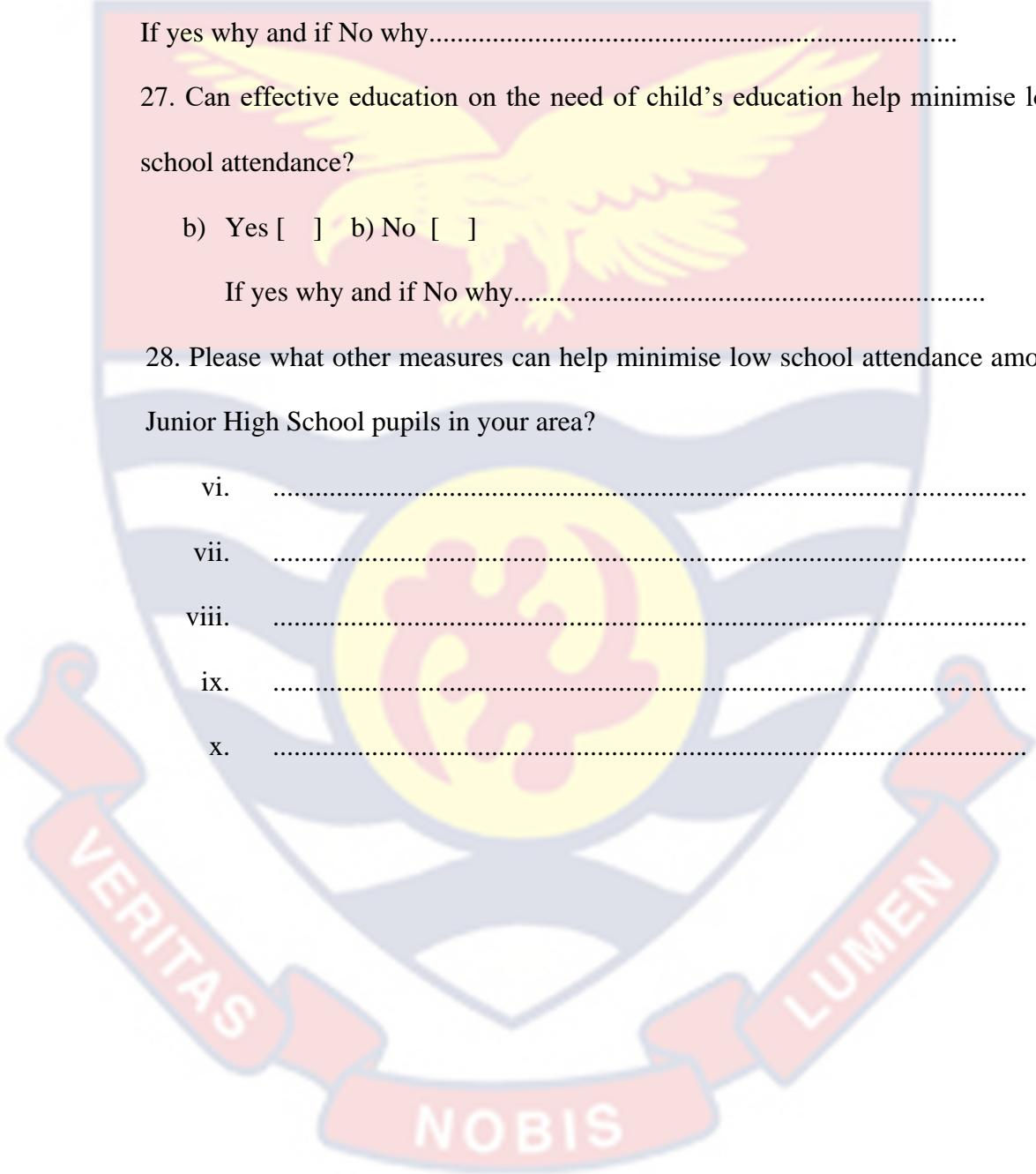
APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS ON LOW SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information on low attendance to school among Junior High School pupils in the Elmina circuit. Please provide every piece of information as objectively and independently as possible. All responses will be treated with confidentiality.

SECTION A

Biographical Data

Please provide the necessary information by ticking in the box where necessary. For others you may specify by writing in the free spaces provided.

    1. Name of school...

    2. Gender: Male [ ]   Female [   ]

    3. Age/ years: 20-24yrs [ ] 25-29yrs [ ]   30-34yrs [ ]   35-39yrs [ ]   40

    and above[ ]

    4. Marital Status   Single [   ]   Married [ ] Divorced [   ] Windowed [ ]

Others specify…………………………………………………………............

 5. Educational Background: MSLC [ ]   Cert A [ ]   Diploma [ ]

 Bachelor Degree [   ]   Masters Degree [   ]

 6. Others specify………………………………………………………

SECTION B

School Related Factors Responsible for Low School Attendance among Junior High School pupils.

Please answer Strongly Disagree (SD), or Disagree (D), and or Strongly Agree (SA) or Agree (A) by ticking in the box where necessary to reflect your attendance in your school:

School Related Factors	S D	D	A	S A
7. I have cordial relationship with my pupi.ls.				
8.Curriculum is uninteresting and irrelevant				
9. Bullying by friends prevent children from coming to school regularly.				
10. The school has inadequate Teaching/learning materials.				
11. Rewards do not encourage children to come to school.				
12. Poor academic performances discourage children from Coming to school always.				
13. Illnesses prevent children from coming to school always.				
14. Low self image/ self-esteem prevent pupils from coming to school always.				
15. Friends who cause trouble in school prevent other children from coming to always.				
16. Sanctions do not deter children from staying away from school.				

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17. Please indicate other school related factors that are responsible for low

school

i..

ii..

iii...

iv...

v..

SECTION C

Peer / Child Himself Related Factors Responsible For Low School

Attendance

Please answer yes or no by ticking in the box to indicate your opinion on peer

related / child himself factors responsible for low school attendance.

Peer / Child Himself Related Factors	Yes	No
18. Does teasing / bullying from friends prevent pupils from coming to school?		
19. Do children with weak academic performance stay away from school?		
20. Do children stay away from school because their friends do that?		

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21. Indicate other peer / child related factors that are responsible for low school attendance in your school?

i...

ii..

iii...

iv...

SECTION D

Measures to minimize low school attendance among Junior High School pupils

22. Can marking the class attendance register twice a day prevent pupils from absenting themselves from school?

     a) Yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

     If yes why and If no why

23. In your opinion, can schools working in partnership with parents reduce pupils low attendance to school?

     a) Yes [   ]   b) No   [   ]

     If yes why and if No

     why..

24. Can providing financial support to pupils with financial problems help reduce truancy?

    c) Yes [   ] b) No [   ]

     If Yes why and if no why...

25. Can cordial relationship between teachers and pupils motivate pupils to attend school regularly?

a) Yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

If yes why and if No why...

26. Can penalties on parents whose children stay away from school help reduce the incidence of low school attendance?

a) Yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

If yes why and if No why..

27. Can effective education on the need of child's education help minimise low school attendance?

   c) Yes [   ]   b) No [   ]

      If yes why and if No why...

28. Please what other measures can help minimise low school attendance among Junior High School pupils in your area?

   xi.   ....

   xii.   ....

   xiii. ....

   xiv.   ....

   xv.   ....

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