

STUDY HABITS OF STUDENTS: KEYS TO GOOD ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE EKUMFI DISTRICT OF GHANA

Joseph Bentil, Kweku Esia-Donkoh and Robert Andrews Ghanney

Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba, GHANA

ABSTRACT: *This study examined the effect of study habits on the academic performance among public Junior High Schools in Ekumfi District in the Central Region of Ghana. It adopted the Study Habits Inventory Theory postulated by Bakare (1977). The mixed sequential explanatory approach was followed in the conduct of the study where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed. The multi-stage sampling procedure with the use of proportionate stratified random sampling and convenience sampling techniques were used to select 475 students' even though 380 were correctly filled and therefore used for the study. Structured questionnaire, semi-structured interview guide and checklist were used as instruments for data collection. With the aid of the Version 20 of the Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS), descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistical tools such independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA and Multiple Regression were used to analyse the quantitative data whilst the thematic approach was used to analyse the qualitative data. The findings of the study revealed that study habits significantly accounted for 44% variance in students' academic performance. It further showed that reading and note-taking ($\beta=0.605, p=0.000$) and time management ($\beta=0.133, p=0.001$) made unique significant individual contribution to academic performance whilst the contribution of examination ($\beta=0.011, p=0.830$), homework and assignments ($\beta=0.036, p=0.529$), and concentration ($\beta=-.039, p=0.394$) did not individually contribute significantly to academic performance. Besides, the study hypothesis disclosed that apart from gender and age, the circuit and form significantly impact on their academic performance. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should pay attention to study habits of students so as to heighten academic performance of students in Ekumfi District.*

KEYWORDS: Study Habits, Academic Performance, and Junior High School

INTRODUCTION

The call for the provision of quality education has heightened in recent times due to the adoption of international conventions that seek to expand access to education to all citizens irrespective of socio-cultural, economic, and religious background as such have been tremendous reforms in education systems globally (Kgosikebatho, 2013; Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu & Hunt, 2007). Ghana became a signatory to the Education for All (EFA) initiative in Dakar, Senegal in September 2000, and the United Nations' Millennium Goals on education which seeks to provide quality basic education to all school-going age children. As a result, Ghana has shown commitment to the achievement of Universal Basic Education by implementing interventions such as the capitation grant, school feeding programme, free exercise books and uniforms to improve access to basic education. Consequently, students' enrolment has increased in recent years due to these interventions (Education Sector Annual Report, 2013).

However, scholars are convinced that it is not enrolment per se, but rather the quality of education and learning outcomes that is more strongly linked with a country's economic development (Hanushek & Wobmann, 2009). Intuitively, it could be concluded that increase in enrolment is necessary but an insufficient indicator of education success. According to Ampofo and Osei-Owusu (2015), academic achievement is one of the key defining indicators of student educational success. This assertion implies that poor academic performance of students is evident of lack of necessary capacities for socio-economic progress and personal fulfillment. It could be inferred from the above views that students' academic achievement is a measure of quality education and the key to a country's progress.

Extant literature has documented various factors which either bolster or throttle the academic performance of students. In their study, Tshabalala and Ncube (2013) observed that inadequate instructional materials, inappropriate teaching methods, teachers self-motivation and lack of funds strongly affect the academic performance of students. Consistent with this revelation, Nyaboga, Bosire and Ajowi (2016) unveil internal and external classroom factors to affect students academic performance. According to these scholars, internal factors such as teacher competency, class size, inadequate teaching and learning materials, and teacher motivation influences students academic performance. Scrutiny of the above factors indicates that most of them are beyond the control of students. For instance, school-related factors such as supervision and class size are determined by policies which students do not control. What students have control over is their study habits (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). Romeo (2006) concurs that students cannot learn simply by being told what to do or by watching others but rather they have to practice studying habitually. He stressed that students' success hinges on their effectiveness, efficiency and concentration on studying and these are affected by the learning materials they use and the way they use it. Implicitly, it could be said that even though learning resources are vital to students' success, it hinges on the energy expended by students to study where they apply learning resources to their studies.

Cardelle-Elawar and Nevin (2003) expound that study habit refers to the conscious and purposeful use of one's cognitive skills, feelings, and actions to maximize the learning of knowledge and skills for a given task and set of conditions. Cardelle-Elawar and Nevein (2003) consider study habit as the application of an individual's intelligence, emotions, and activities towards the acquisition of knowledge and skills to accomplish an assignment. Logically, effective study habit is contingent on keen intellectual competence, stable emotions, and relevant activities deliberately directed to construct knowledge and develop skills so as to attain a goal. Furthermore, Crede and Kuncel (2008) add that review of material, self-testing and rehearsal of learned material are constituents of study habit. The views of these scholars suggest that study habit demands personal commitment of students to grasp concepts, revise, and personally assess one's proficiency to ascertain the extent of consolidation of subject matter. Wood and Neal (2007) conclude that study habits are approaches applied to learning. Understandably, good study habits assist students to apply their thought processes to identify relevant bodies of knowledge and evaluation of same. Conversely, poor study habits impede students' capacity to engage in constructive intellectual exercise.

Empirical research findings exist to endorse the claim that study habits impacts academic performance (Bashir & Mattoo, 2012). It could be construed that students academic performance is expected to shrink when they exhibit poor and inappropriate study habit. In their observation, Sarwar, Bashir, Khan, and Khan (2009) concluded that overachievers possessed better study habits than underachievers. Similarly, other studies like Crede and

Kuncel (2008) and Nuthana and Yenagi (2009) support the findings of earlier studies that study habits impact academic performance of students. They further revealed that students who are better in reading and note-taking, well prepared for the board examination and have concentration may have better academic achievement. The results of these studies suggest that good study habits enhance academic performance whilst poor study habits stifles students academic performance.

Researchers have documented the effect of demographic variables of students and how they impact on their academic performance. Consequently, studies have unveiled that class level, gender, age, and geographical location of a school are variables that have caught the attention of previous researchers in determining their impact on academic performance of students. A gap between the achievement of boys and girls has been found with girls showing better performance than boys in certain instances (Chambers & Schreiber, 2004). Ceballo, McLoyd and Toyokawa (2004) established in their study that student's gender strongly affects their academic performance with girls performing better in the subjects of Mathematics, and English as well as aggregate performance. These authors explained that girls usually show more efforts in their studies leading to better grades at school. However, this finding of Ugoji (2008) found no significant difference in the academic performance of students based on gender.

Other studies found that age influences academic performance of students. Previous studies (Zeegers, 2004 & Huang and Invernizzi, 2012) found that mature age students consistently perform better on an academics than younger ones. Huang and Invernizzi (2012) found that younger students had lower literacy scores than the older students in the same class. Contrarily, Grissom (2004) in his study concluded that there is a negative relationship between age and achievement which remains persists over time. Therefore, when students grow older their academic performance diminishes. In this study, young and old students were used as predictor of their academic performance. The young were students who were between the ages of 10 to 14. Old were those students who were overage (14 years and above) and still in school as a result of either late entry or repetition. Some scholars depart from the connection between actual age and academic performance when they argue that it is rather the age at which a student enters school that matters.

School location and class have also been explored in several studies in connection to academic performance. According to Akomolafe, and Olanfemi-Olabisi (2011), school location influences students' academic achievement. More recently, Igboegwu and Okonkwo (2012) study indicated a significant difference in students' achievement with respect to location of school and education zones. Nonetheless, these researchers did not identify the nature of the location that supports superior performance. For class, Bernardi (2014) disclosed that lower grade students outperform their upper grade students. Based on this result, academic performance among JHS 1 students could be better than those in JHS 2. The literature has shown that age, gender, educational zones/school location, and class level are determinants of academic performance albeit with conflicting results. These mixed results suggest that evidence through studies is required to examine the linkage between gender and academic performance.

Meanwhile reports in Ghana have shown that generally, students academic performance at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) level has been a perturbing issue (Ministry of Education, 2013), and the Ekumfi District is no exception. Students performance at (BECE) in the Ekumfi District is not encouraging as presented in Figure 1.

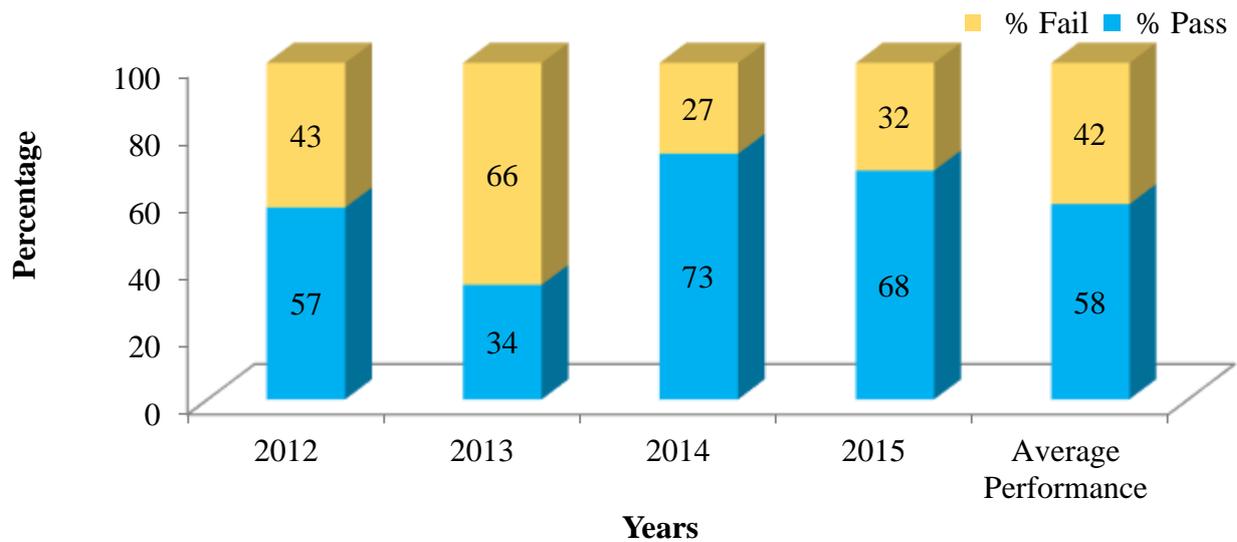


Figure 1 BECE Performance History

Source: Ekumfi Education Office Statistics Department (2012-2015)

It could be observed from Figure 1 that in 2012, 57% passed and 43% failed. Performance however took a nosedive in 2013 where 34% passed while 66% failed. In 2014, 73% passed while 27% failed. Performance again improved in 2015 as 68% passed while 32% failed. The information has disclosed the average performance pass from 2012 to 2015 is 58% which indicated that 42% of the students failed each year. Even though studies have reported that poor study habits led to poor student academic performance (Bashir & Mattoo, 2012; Huang & Invernizzi, 2012). Similarly, the poor academic performance of the students in the Ekumfi District could be attributed to their poor study habits. However, research into the effect between study habits and students' academic performance in the Ekumfi District is rare. It is against this backdrop that this study is carried out to provide empirical evidence on the effect between study habits and students' academic performance in the Ekumfi District.

It is anticipated that the findings will help in obtaining contextual data to shed more light on the effect of study habits on academic performance, thereby expand the frontiers of knowledge in the field. Practically, the researcher hopes that the findings will be significant to education stakeholders to determine how students' study habits affect their (students) academic performance. This will help them to either intensify or modify their study habits for better academic performance.

The study was guided by this research question:

1. What is the effect of study habits on academic performance of public junior high school students in the Ekumfi District?

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H₀₁: There is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of students in the circuits.

H₀₂: There is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of JHS1 and JHS2 students in the Ekumfi District.

H₀₃: There is no statistically significant difference in the academic performance of boys and girls in the Ekumfi District.

H₀₄: There is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of young and old pupils in the Ekumfi District.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the cross-sectional descriptive survey design particularly the sequential explanatory mixed method where qualitative data through interviews were collected to supplement the quantitative data for rich and in-depth understanding of the phenomena (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). Therefore, the design involves employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches because researching the issue of study habits of students is complex, and as Creswell (2009) suggests, one approach alone cannot adequately supply all the answers. Accordingly, the variety of data collection instruments will provide rich, in-depth qualitative as well as large objective quantitative data so as to shed light on the study habit of the students, and its effect on their academic performance.

In this research, the target population consisted of all Junior High School students in the Ekumfi District. This comprised 1,644 boys and 1,520 girls, totaling 3,164. These students were considered appropriate for the study because they are preparing to write the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Their study habits are therefore cardinal to ascertain how they are studying which has implications for their academic performance in the BECE. A sample size of 475 was drawn from the population for the quantitative phase of the study. This sample size was deemed representative of the target population based on the recommendations of Gay and Airasian (2003) that a sample size of 10% to 20% of the target population is representative in descriptive research. This sample size represented about 15% of the target population. The size of the sample was accepted as representative of the target population based on the suggestion by Gay and Airasian (2003) that a sample size of 10% to 20% of the target population is representative in descriptive. The researcher therefore chose a sample size that was greater than the minimum suggestion proposed by Gay and Airasian (2003).

The study adopted a multi-stage sampling method by the use of proportionate stratified random sampling and convenience sampling in the selection of the study sample. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to put the population into strata and random selection was done so that each stratum is fairly representative of the target population (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The main principle of the stratified sampling is that each member of the population has equal chance of being selected to be in the sample, and that the sample replicates the population. The selection of the sample was done at two levels. First, the target population was categorized into five (5) circuit (Eyisam, Essarkyir, Narkwa, Essuehyia, and Otuam), and the percentage of each circuit to the population was computed. For instance, Eyisam Circuit had 695 students representing about 22% of the population. Therefore, 22% of the sample size (475) represents about 104 students. The second stage of the selection was based on gender. Out of the population size for Eyisam (695), 332 (48%) were boys and 363 (52%) were girls. Based on these percentages, 50 boys and 54 girls were selected in Eyisam Circuit using simple

random sampling technique. The same process was followed in selecting sample from the other circuit in the district. Convenience sampling was employed to select 10 students (5 male and 5 female) for the interview. Convenience sampling relies on available participants who agree to participate in a study. Scholars like Polit and Beck (2010) argue that for qualitative studies samples are typically small and based on information needs.

INSTRUMENTATION

Data were collected by an adapted version of Bakare's (1977) Study Habits Inventory (SHI) Questionnaire, self-constructed semi-structured interview guide and checklist that was used to record examination scores of the students. The questionnaires were structured and required participants to circle only one option to reflect their perception. Sekaran, (2006) recounts advantages of using questionnaire such as it being able to obtain data more efficiently, economical in terms of time, energy and costs. Besides, the use of the questionnaire provided an excellent means of measuring attitudes in a large population which can, therefore, be generalized to a larger population (Babbie, 2002). The study habit questionnaire with 34 items categorized under homework and assignments; time allocation; reading and note-taking; concentration; and time management. The questionnaire was made up of two sections. Section A focused on the background information of the students and Section B measured the variables measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Undecided; 4= Agree; and 5= Strongly Agree).

The study habit questionnaire obtained a high reliability coefficient of 0.88 which falls within the acceptable range of at least 0.7 as recommended by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) of Cronbach alpha coefficient. A rationale for the appropriateness of an interview in this study is put forward by Creswell (2003) when he maintains that it allows exploration of variables under investigation in greater detail, and so complements a survey. The semi-structured interview was one-on-one and allowed the researcher to focus on the research questions, yet open up new avenues for further probing to unearth important issues (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). With permission from the participants, the conversations were audio taped to ensure a more accurate data representation during transcription and analysis. A checklist was used to collect end of term examination scores in English Language, Integrated Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies for 2016/2017 academic year were used. These subjects were considered because they are core subjects that all students study and are crucial in determining students' grades at the BECE. The examination was conducted by the Ekumfi Education Directorate which was considered to be standardized. Hence, comparison could be made based on the results of the examination within the district.

DATA ANALYSIS

Prior to the analysis, the researcher read through the questionnaires, and removed those that were not answered or poorly answered. Then, the data were coded and entered into the Version 22 Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS) which aided the data analysis. Inferential statistical tools such Multiple Regression, independent sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used to analyse the quantitative data whilst the thematic approach was used to analyse the qualitative data. To determine the effect of study habits on academic performance, multiple

regression analysis was carried out using forced entry method at 0.05 alpha level. With this method, all the predictor variables were entered into the equation and the relative contribution of each predictor to the outcome variable was assessed (Pallant, 2005). The study habits served as predictor variables, and academic performance was the dependent variable in the regression equation. The formulated hypothesis was tested using independent sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA where means were compared to see if it reached statistical significance. The analysis of the qualitative data was carried by playing the recorded tapes and listening to it for several times, transcribing the tapes into texts, and extracting themes from the responses of the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: *What is the effect of study habits on academic performance of public junior high school students in the Ekumfi District?*

In order to answer this research question, a multiple regression analysis was carried out where examination, reading and note-taking, homework and assignments, concentration, and time management were used as predictors of academic performance in the regression model and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Multiple Regression and ANOVA Results for Study Habits and Academic Performance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	70.279	5	14.056	58.889	0.000
	Residual	89.267	374	0.239		
	Total	159.546	379			

R = 0.664

R² = 0.440

Adjusted R² = .433

Std. Error of the Estimate=0.489

Source: Field work, 2016

The multiple regression results as presented in Table 1 revealed that collectively study habits accounted for 44% in students academic performance which was proven to be statistically significant [F (5, 374) =58.889, p=0.000] at 0.05 alpha level. The results implied that study habit is a good predictor of students' academic performance, and that other factors not included in this study could contribute 56% in students' academic performance in the Ekumfi District.

The study further investigated the contribution of each study habit inventory, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Standardized and Unstandardized Coefficients for Study Habits

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	0.290	0.206		1.407	0.160		
Examination	0.011	0.049	0.011	0.215	0.830	0.585	1.710
Homework and Assignments	0.034	0.054	0.036	0.630	0.529	0.447	2.237
Reading and Note-Taking	0.708	0.075	0.605	9.402	0.000	0.362	2.765
Concentration	-0.039	0.046	-0.039	-.853	0.394	0.719	1.391
Time Management	0.129	0.039	0.133	3.311	0.001	0.934	1.071

An inspection of the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) results has shown that the assumption of Multicollinearity was not violated. The results in Table 2 disclosed that reading and note-taking ($\beta=0.605$, $p=0.000$) and time management ($\beta=0.133$, $p=0.001$) made unique significant individual contribution to academic performance whilst the contribution of examination ($\beta=0.011$, $p=0.830$), homework and assignments ($\beta=0.036$, $p=0.529$), and concentration ($\beta=-.039$, $p=0.394$) did not individually contribute significantly to academic performance. It could be noticed that even though reading and note-taking and time management are good predictors of academic performance, the results have shown that reading and note-taking contributed stronger than time management.

Data from the interviews supported the findings of the quantitative data that study habits affect academic performance. One of the students had this to say:

Those who learn everyday get high marks than those who don't learn at all. Sir if you don't learn you will not know anything. Some of my classmates feel that they are intelligent, so they don't learn. Because they don't learn, they get low marks in class tests and examinations (Female JHS2 Pupil, Interview Data, 2016).

However, some of the students stressed that the quality of study habits determines the level of academic performance. This point was contained in the following comment:

Some of us take the book and behave as if we are studying, but our mind is not on what we are learning. For example, I sometimes take the book to study, but for about ten or fifteen minutes I start to sleep (Female JHS2 Pupil, Interview Data, 2016).

Similar point was made by another pupil thus:

Sir there is one boy in my class who learns well. He knows how to read very well, and he learns always after school. He has small notebooks, and he writes points in these notebooks. Anywhere he goes, he carries these notebooks and read them. He gets high marks and he is always first in examinations (Male JHS1 Pupil, Interview Data, 2016).

A girl lamented that:

I study every day after school, but I don't do well in school. I don't go out like my friends. I am always in the house, and I study my notes and textbooks. But I always forget what I learn (Female JHS1 Pupil, Interview Data, 2016).

From the above comments, it is implied that good study habits is liked directly with good academic performance, and ineffective study habits result in poor academic performance.

Test of the Study's Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of students in the circuits.

A one-way between groups ANOVA test was employed to test this hypothesis, and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: ANOVA Results for Circuits and Academic Performance

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Academic Performance	Between Groups	9542.9	4	2385.73	36.723	0.000
	Within Groups	24361.9	375	64.965		
	Total	33904.8	379			

The ANOVA results in Table 3 has disclosed that the differences in students' academic performance in the circuits reached statistical significance [$F(4, 375) = 36.723, p=0.000$] at 0.05 alpha level. Based on this result, the null hypothesis that there is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of students in the circuits was not supported whilst the alternative hypothesis was supported.

H₀₂: There is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of JHS1 and JHS2 students in the Ekumfi District.

The second hypothesis was to examine the effect of level of students on their academic performance. In testing this hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was used and the results are presented in Table 4.

It could be seen from Table 4 that JHS2 students performed higher ($M=49.14, SD=4.57$) than JHS1 students ($M=47.36, SD=3.28$). The t-test results indicated that there was a statistical significant difference in the performance of JHS2 and JHS1 students [$t(378) = -1.844, p=0.066, 2$ -tailed] at 0.05 alpha level where JHS2 students had significantly better academic performance than those in JHS1. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of JHS1 and JHS2 students was not supported whereas the alternative hypothesis was supported.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and T-test Results for Form and Academic Performance

	Form	Mean	Std. Dev.		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Academic Performance	JHS1	47.36	3.28	EVA	0.000	0.983	-1.844	378	0.066
	JHS2	49.14	4.57	EVNA			-1.845	377.804	0.066

Note: EVA= Equal Variances Assumed; EVNA= Equal Variances not Assumed

H₀₃: There is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of boys and girls in the Ekumfi District.

The third hypothesis was to determine the effect of gender on the academic performance of students. In testing this hypothesis, an independent sample t-test was used. The academic performance of boys and girls was compared, and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and T-test Results for Gender and Academic Performance

	Gender	Mean	Std. Dev.		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Academic Performance	Male	48.70	4.76	EVA	1.030	0.311	0.886	378	0.376
	Female	47.84	4.14	EVNA			0.887	377.798	0.376

Note: EVA= Equal Variances Assumed; EVNA= Equal Variances not Assumed

Reviewing Table 5 has shown that boys recorded higher performance (M=48.70, SD=4.76) than girls (M=47.82, SD=4.14). However, the t-test results indicated that the difference in the performance did not reach statistical significance [$t(378) = 0.886$, $p=0.376$, 2-tailed] at 0.05 alpha level due to gender. It could be concluded that the null hypothesis that there is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of boys and girls in the Ekumfi District is supported whilst the alternative hypothesis was not supported.

H₀₄: There is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of young and old pupils in the Ekumfi District.

To provide answers to this hypothesis, the performance of young and old pupils were compared, and the results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Mean, Standard Deviation and T-test Results for Sex and Academic Performance

	Age	Mean	Std. Dev.		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Academic Performance	Young	48.02	2.51	EVA	0.001	0.971	.751	378	0.453
	Old	48.80	3.36	EVNA			-.755	250.002	0.451

Note: EVA = Equal Variances Assumed; EVNA = Equal Variances not Assumed

It could be observed from Table 6 that older students recorded higher performance ($M = 48.80$, $SD = 3.36$) than younger pupils ($M = 48.02$, $SD = 2.51$). Nevertheless, the t-test results confirmed that there was no statistical significant difference in the performance of pupils [$t(378) = -.751$, $p = 0.453$, 2-tailed] at 0.05 alpha level due to age. Based on these results, the null hypothesis that there is no statistical significant difference in the academic performance of young and old pupils in the Ekumfi District was supported whilst the alternative hypothesis was not supported.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In examining the effect of study habits on the academic performance of students, the findings revealed that study habits accounted for 44% in students academic performance which was proven to be statistically significant [$F(5, 374) = 58.889$, $p = 0.000$]. Based on these results, it was concluded that study habits was a good predictor of academic performance of students in the Ekumfi District. This finding concurs with previous studies (Crede & Kuncel, 2008; Nuthana & Yenagi, 2009; Sarwar et al., 2009; Bashir & Mattoo, 2012) where it was found that study habits affected academic performance of students. Nevertheless, reading and note-taking ($\beta = 0.605$, $p = 0.000$) and time management ($\beta = 0.133$, $p = 0.001$) made unique contributions to academic performance of the students whereas examination ($\beta = .011$, $p = .830$), homework and assignments ($\beta = 0.036$, $p = 0.529$), and concentration ($\beta = -.039$, $p = 0.394$) did not influence academic performance. The finding that time allocation does not affect academic performance is inconsistent with Strauss and Volkwein's (2002) study where it was discovered that time allocation influenced academic performance whilst it agrees with previous studies (Minotti, 2005; Mushtag & Khan, 2012) where homework/assignment affected academic performance. Besides, the finding of the study is similar to Kiewra, Benton and Lewis's (2007) finding that note taking influences academic attainment of students. Whilst this study validates the finding of Oladele (2000) that concentration affects academic performance, it disagrees with Oluwatimilehin and Owoyele's (2012) where it was found that concentration did not affect academic performance. Furthermore, this study's finding reflects Agarwal's (2008) that time management influenced academic performance.

Four hypotheses were tested in this study. For the first hypothesis, it was revealed that there was a statistical significant difference in the academic performance of students in the circuits which endorses previous studies (Akomolufe & Olorumfemi-Olabisi, 2011; Igboegwu & Okonkwo, 2012) where school location and education zones influenced students' academic

achievement. Evidence on the second hypothesis proved that JHS1 and JHS2 students differed in their academic performance where JHS2 students outperform those in JHS1. This finding disagrees with Bernardi's (2014) conclusion that lower grade students outstrip their upper grade peers in academic performance. However, performance in both classes was below average. On gender, the study found that that boys and girls did not differ in their academic performance departs from previous studies (Ceballo, McLoyd & Toyokawa, 2004; Chambers & Schreiber, 2004) but supports Ugoji's (2008) finding. Finally, evidence on the fourth hypothesis disclosed that age did not influence academic performance of the students which contradicts the results of previous studies (Zeegers, 2004; Huang & Invernizzi, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that study habits is vital in determining academic performance of students in the Junior High Schools in Ekumfi District in the Central Region of Ghana. With this exposé, it is important that students adopt good study habits if they desire to improve their academic performance. However, it was established that even though gender and age did not significantly influence students' academic performance, the results of the study indicated that circuits of students and form (JHS1 / JHS 2) influenced the academic performance of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made from the study:

1. The study disclosed that study habits impacted academic performance of the students. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should organize in-service training for head teachers, teachers, and parents to help them identify the preferred study habits of the students and guide them accordingly.
2. The study has shown that reading and note-taking and time management contributed significantly to academic performance. Therefore, it is recommended that head teachers and teachers adopt measures to strengthen students' reading and note-taking and time management skills to boost academic performance.
3. Again, the students should be reoriented to improve study habits in relation to time allocation, concentration, and homework/ assignment since these are crucial aspects of schooling. In line with this, the Colleges of Education and the universities in charge of teacher education should incorporate contents related to students' study habits into their curricula so that graduates are well grounded to assist students in their study habits for improved academic performance.
4. Based on the finding that circuits and form of the students affect their academic performance, it is recommended that attention should be directed in these areas since it has the potential to affect the academic performance of students.

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