



*The Cradle of Knowledge: African Journal of
Educational and Social Science Research
AJESSR - ISSN 2304-2885-p, 2617-7315-e
Volume 13, Issue 1, 2025
P.O. Box 555 (00202) Nairobi, Kenya
editor@serek.or.ke*

**SOCIETY OF
EDUCATIONAL
RESEARCH
AND
EVALUATION
IN KENYA**

Learners' Punctuality, Regularity and Academic Achievement: A Thematic Exploration of Millennium Precious Achievers School in Gomoa East Municipality of Ghana

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Abstract

The study explored learners' punctuality and regularity on teaching-learning outcomes among Basic 8 learners at Millennium Precious Achievers Preparatory School in Gomoa-East Municipality, Ghana. Adopting an exploratory case study design, the researchers involved 11 participants: 8 learners selected via census sampling, 2 teachers and a headteacher chosen through purposive sampling. Grounded on Behavioural and Constructivist Theories, data was collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observations. This data was transcribed and analysed thematically using NVivo 12, with participant validation ensuring confirmability. Findings revealed a strong positive correlation between punctuality and academic performance, with punctual learners achieving significantly higher exam scores and demonstrating greater classroom engagement. Teachers reported substantial instructional time loss and classroom disruptions due to irregular attendance, negatively impacting lesson delivery and classroom cohesion. Key challenges identified included socioeconomic barriers, cultural norms, insufficient attendance monitoring, and peer influences. The study concluded that punctuality and regular attendance are critical determinants of academic success and effective lesson delivery. It recommends that the Ghana Education Service strengthen school attendance policies and enforcement through robust monitoring systems with clear consequences and positive reinforcement. Also include implementing socioeconomic support like transport subsidies, community childcare, particularly for vulnerable learners, and designing programmes to raise learner awareness about the importance of punctuality and regularity for academic success and future employability; build teacher capacity in class attendance management and enhancing parental and community engagement in school activities. These findings underscore the importance of a holistic approach to improving attendance behaviours to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Academic achievement; classroom interactions; learning outcomes; learners' participation; punctuality; regular attendance*

1. Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a cornerstone of society's progress and personal advancement for individuals. The quality of education is influenced by numerous factors, one being student attendance behaviours such as punctuality and regularity, as they play crucial roles in determining teaching-learning outcomes. This highlights that maintaining punctuality and regularity in school attendance is considered essential by stakeholders in education, as it significantly influences learners' academic performance and overall growth (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2018). Education systems around the world are still facing challenges when it comes to learners attending classes on time and actively participating in learning activities. These issues have an impact on achievements and the overall quality of education (UNESCO 2022). Research from multiple countries consistently shows a strong correlation between punctuality, regular attendance, and academic achievement. The OECD (2023), in a study of 37 countries, found that learners with over 95% attendance were three times more likely to meet or exceed proficiency levels in core subjects compared to those with attendance below 85%. In the U.S., Gottfried (2019) found that frequent absenteeism among 10,000 elementary learners significantly reduced academic performance, especially in mathematics. Similarly, the UK Department for Education



(2023) reported that every 5% drop in attendance below 95% corresponded with a full-grade drop in GCSE findings. In Sub-Saharan Africa, attendance challenges are more severe due to socioeconomic constraints, with absenteeism rates reaching 15–25% (African Education Watch, 2022), contributing to poor learning outcomes.

In Ghana, student attendance and punctuality challenges reflect broader African patterns but are shaped by unique local conditions. Balwanz and Darvas (2014) reported primary school attendance rates of 70–80%, with notable urban-rural gaps. Despite existing policies, enforcement is inconsistent (GES, 2020). Regular attendance improves academic performance, as shown by Yawson, Ababio & Mensah (2022) and Marfo (2018). Lateness disrupts classes and reduces instructional time (Sackey, 2007). Consistent attendance supports continuity in subjects like math and language (Opoku & Boahen, 2021). Beyond academics, punctuality builds non-cognitive skills. Gyesaw (2021) highlighted how school routines develop discipline and responsibility, making early intervention vital for academic and lifelong success.

At Millennium Precious Achievers Preparatory (MPAP) School, attendance patterns reveal distinct local challenges that affect teaching and learning. During the 2023/2024 academic year, average daily attendance stood at 63%, with 35% of learners frequently arriving late. Teachers reported that these delays disrupted lesson delivery, classroom management, and the flow of sequential instruction, especially when key content was missed. These trends reflect broader concerns about educational quality and not just administrative gaps. This study examined how punctuality and regular attendance affect Basic 8 teaching and learning in Gomoa East Municipality, aiming to inform targeted interventions and policy strategies for improving basic education outcomes in Ghana.

Although the significance of punctuality and regular attendance in basic education is well recognised, limited research explores their specific effects on teaching and learning in Ghanaian basic schools, especially within the sociocultural context of junior high schools in Gomoa East. While studies (Gottfried, 2019; OECD, 2022; Opoku-Asare, Takyi, & Owusu-Mensah, 2019) confirm a strong link between attendance and academic performance, there is a gap in understanding how this plays out within Ghana's sociocultural context, particularly in junior high schools in Gomoa East. At the selected school, 33% of Basic 8 learners arrive late at least twice a week, and 25% are absent biweekly, with teachers frequently repeating lessons and facing continuity challenges. Existing literature affirms the link between attendance and academic performance; however, gaps remain particularly in semi-rural settings, in understanding learners' perspectives, and in identifying targeted interventions for Basic 8 learners preparing for BECE. This study, therefore, investigates how punctuality and regular attendance influence learning outcomes in this context. The research objectives were to :

1. Investigate how learners' punctuality influences their academic engagement and performance in Basic 8.
2. Explore how learners' regular attendance affects teachers' lesson delivery and classroom management.
3. Identify the challenges and factors that affect learners' punctuality and regularity in Basic 8.

1.1 Punctuality and Regular Attendance in Education

Punctuality, defined by Adane (2013) as consistently arriving on time for scheduled activities, reflects responsibility, time consciousness, and commitment in the educational setting. It is a critical factor in effective learning because it ensures cognitive continuity, particularly in subjects like mathematics where lateness often creates knowledge gaps (Fletcher, 2018). Agbobbie (2016) observed that student lateness can reduce instructional time by 12–15 minutes per 40-minute lesson, inadvertently disadvantaging even punctual learners. Beyond immediate academic benefits, punctuality cultivates self-discipline and time-management skills essential for long-term academic and professional success (Kautz et al., 2014; Owusu & Mwinlaaru, 2015). In semi-rural districts like Gomoa East, where learners often contend with transportation issues and domestic responsibilities, punctuality becomes an equity issue, influencing access to meaningful instruction (Ampofo & Osei-Owusu, 2021).

Educational research consistently links punctuality with improved academic performance, primarily through its impact on instructional continuity, cognitive sequencing, and classroom culture. Opoku and Boahen (2021) reported that learners maintaining over 95% attendance often supported by initiatives such as Ghana's capitation grant achieved 28% higher gains in reading, writing, and mathematics than peers with lower attendance. This illustrates punctuality's role in enhancing learning outcomes and human capital development (OECD, 2023), aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) theory that sustained, scaffolded learning depends on consistent classroom engagement. School-level interventions also demonstrate tangible benefits. At Achimota Preparatory and Junior Secondary School, Baiden-Amissah (2007)



found that enhanced supervision and structured interventions reduced lateness by 42% over two terms, which translated to a 15% improvement in core subject performance (Kautz et al., 2014). This aligns with Skinner's (1953) behavioural theory, which posits that consistent reinforcement helps cultivate positive habits. STEM subjects show particular sensitivity to punctuality; punctual learners mastered 2.3 times more mathematics skills, reinforcing Bruner's (1960) spiral curriculum model where sequential learning is critical.

Global research further highlights punctuality as a universal determinant of academic success. An OECD (2023) study across 37 countries revealed that punctual learners were 2.5 times more likely to attain proficiency in core subjects than their frequently late peers. Similarly, Amdi and Moyo (2017) emphasized that societal norms around time consciousness influence academic performance, while Hanushek and Woessmann (2015) found that schools with high punctual attendance report fewer disciplinary issues and more effective learning environments. These international findings corroborate Ghanaian evidence, confirming that punctuality underpins both academic achievement and positive school culture. For districts like Gomoa East, integrating punctuality into school policies could significantly boost learner engagement and outcomes. Closely related to punctuality is regular attendance, defined as consistent daily presence at school with minimal absences, typically meeting at least 90% attendance during an academic term (Ancheta et al., 2021; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2018). Regular attendance sustains instructional continuity and promotes active learning engagement. Doe and Smith (2015) and Brown and Taylor (2017) found strong correlations between consistent attendance and academic achievement, as regular presence supports content mastery and skill acquisition. Attakumah (2020) further observed that learners with steady attendance develop a sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and stability that enhances their academic engagement.

Despite its importance, achieving regular attendance in Ghana is challenged by socioeconomic, geographic, and institutional barriers. National studies report elementary attendance rates between 70% and 80%, with urban-rural disparities, while absenteeism ranges from 15% to 25%, exceeding the global average (Balwanz & Darvas, 2014; African Education Watch, 2022). Poverty, illness, long commutes, and family responsibilities are major contributors. Sen's (1999) capability approach illustrates how economic deprivation limits educational access, while Addai-Mununkum (2019), drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) Cultural Capital Theory, explains how learners' life experiences shape school engagement. In Gomoa East, Lewin's (2015) "participation paradox" is evident: families value schooling but face structural constraints. Gender disparities exacerbate absenteeism; girls' attendance declines by 23% during farming seasons (Akycampong & Rolleston, 2018), and boys are often withdrawn for labor. Low parental education further compounds irregular attendance (Ananga, 2013; Donkor, 2013). School and community factors also play a critical role. Carter, Rose, Sabates, and Akycampong (2020) highlighted that community perceptions and gender norms shape school engagement. Schools with strong, consistently enforced attendance policies, combined with proactive parental communication, achieved 32% higher attendance rates (GES, 2020; Sackey, 2007). Learners' perceptions of schooling further influence attendance. Dadzie (2013) observed that learners who viewed education as relevant to their future attended school 35% more regularly, while Obiri Agyei (2019) emphasized the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Irregular attendance and lateness directly undermine effective lesson delivery and classroom management. Teachers may lose up to 30% of instructional time managing disruptions, revisiting content, and bridging knowledge gaps (Sackey, 2007; Agbobie, 2016). These interruptions reduce teaching efficiency and destabilize classroom routines. Kumi-Yeboah and Ampomah (2023) note that adapting instruction to diverse learner backgrounds, while essential, further strains instructional flow. Overall, irregular attendance weakens engagement, complicates discipline, and limits equitable learning opportunities. In conclusion, punctuality and regular attendance are foundational to academic success in Ghana and globally. They support instructional continuity, enhance engagement, and foster disciplined learning environments. Addressing structural, socioeconomic, and cultural barriers to attendance particularly in semi-rural districts like Gomoa East is essential to improving learning outcomes and advancing educational equity.

1.2 Theoretical Perspective

This study is anchored on both Behavioural and Constructivist learning theories. Behavioural theory, particularly B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning explains how attendance patterns influence learning outcomes. Skinner posits that behaviour is shaped by reinforcement and punishment. At the MPAP school in Gomoa East Municipality, consistent positive reinforcement, like praise or rewards, can improve punctuality and foster a productive learning climate for Basic 8 learners. Negative reinforcement, such as removing restrictions when attendance improves, also encourages



positive habits. In contrast, lack of reinforcement or reliance on punishment may increase absenteeism. This supports Agboblle (2016) and Sackey (2007), who found positive reinforcement more effective than punitive measures at this level. Additionally, the study draws on Constructivist theories, particularly Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis on learning through social interaction. Regular attendance ensures learners can fully participate in collaborative classroom experiences, benefiting from teacher and peer support within the Zone of Proximal Development. These interactions are essential for cognitive growth, especially in culturally and socially grounded environments like those in Ghanaian basic schools.

2. Research Methods

This exploratory qualitative study employed a case study design to investigate how learners' punctuality and regularity affect the academic outcomes of Basic 8 learners. The design enabled an in-depth examination of attendance patterns and their impact on performance (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018; Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). The study targeted all Basic 8 learners, their teachers, and the headteacher in the MPAP school in Gomaa-East Municipality. Basic 8 was chosen purposefully because it is the penultimate year before the BECE, and its small class size allowed detailed tracking of attendance and performance. Teachers contributed insights on instructional impacts, while the headteacher provided attendance and performance records.

A total of eleven participants were involved: eight learners (selected through census sampling), two teachers, and the headteacher (purposely sampled based on expertise and familiarity with attendance challenges) (Patton, 2015; Etikan et al., 2016). Teachers met criteria of subject specialisation and at least two years of continuous service. This sampling strategy enhanced internal validity and contextual depth despite limited statistical generalisability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A multi-stage verification process- eligibility checks, record reviews, and informed consent ensured data credibility (Ampofo & Osei-Owusu, 2021).

Three qualitative instruments supported comprehensive data collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with learners (45–60 minutes, 12 questions) and teachers (60–75 minutes, 15 scenario-based questions) to explore attendance barriers and instructional responses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Classroom observations used a 5-minute time-sampling approach and 20-category behavioural coding (Cohen et al., 2018). Attendance was tracked using a GES-adapted register, categorising lateness and recording absenteeism reasons, while academic data comprised termly exams and continuous assessments (OECD, 2023). Instruments were refined through expert review, pilot testing, and cognitive pretesting to ensure reliability and cultural relevance.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Education, Winneba, and permission from GES and the MPAP school. Ethical procedures included informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, harm avoidance, and adherence to school rules (BERA, 2018). Data collection lasted four weeks. Interviews were transcribed, validated by participants, and analysed using NVivo 12 following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Classroom observations complemented interview findings, and symbolic codes (T1–T2, HT, L1–L8) protected anonymity. Credibility was enhanced through member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing, digital audit trails, and negative case analysis (Birt et al., 2022; Flick, 2022).

3. Analysis Result

Results should Learners' Punctuality and Academic Engagement and Performance

The in-depth interviews with learners and teachers, as well as classroom observations, gave a clear insight into the relationship between punctuality and academic engagement. The following themes emerged:

3.1 Classroom Participation

Punctual learners were observed to be more actively engaged in classroom activities, as they frequently ask questions, volunteer answers, and complete assignments. In contrast, their peers who were regularly late participated less in the classroom and appeared disengaged.

As one teacher noted:

"The learners who come on time are the ones who eagerly participate in discussions and seem to grasp the concepts much better." Similarly, a punctual learner shared their perspective: when I come to school on time, I can participate in all the lessons, and I understand the work better. I don't want to miss out on anything." (T1).



3.1.1 Learning Continuity

Learners who arrive late normally struggle to catch up with the rest of the class, as they miss essential instructional steps at the start of lessons. This disrupted their learning progression, which made them feel lost or disconnected from the content. As one learner expressed:

"When I arrive late to class, I feel lost and confused because the teacher has already started explaining key points. I struggle to follow the lesson and often feel anxious, constantly asking friends what was said. Sometimes they help, but other times they're focused on the lesson. It makes me realise how much I miss and how important it is to be on time" (L1).

"Teachers observed that learners who frequently arrive late often miss crucial instructions at the start of lessons, leading to difficulty understanding key concepts. This causes them to spend class time catching up rather than engaging with new material, resulting in knowledge gaps. Over time, lateness is associated with lower test scores, incomplete assignments, and reduced participation. Latecomers also disrupt lesson flow by seeking repeated explanations, and many appear frustrated or disengaged, further widening the performance gap with their punctual classmates" (T2).

3.1.2 Motivation and Self-Regulation

Punctual learners showed greater self-discipline, intrinsic motivation, and commitment to their studies. They see punctuality as crucial for maximising their learning opportunities and improving their success in academics. As one learner explained:

"I always try to arrive at school on time because it helps me stay focused and perform better in exams. Being late makes me feel left behind and unmotivated. When I'm punctual, I can review notes, ask questions, and start class calmly. It boosts my confidence and helps me feel more prepared and in control of my learning" (L3).

Conversely, learners who struggled with punctuality often cited external factors as barriers, such as household responsibilities or transportation challenges. One such learner described their experience,

"Sometimes I have to help my mother with chores at home before I can come to school, and that makes me get to school late. By the time I finished sweeping and washing dishes, I had already missed part of the first lesson. Even though I try to hurry, I still end up arriving after the bell rings, feeling stressed and worried about falling behind." (L3).

Despite these barriers, they expressed a desire to improve their punctuality but felt constrained by circumstances outside their control.

3.1.3 Observational Insights

Observations that were done in the classroom corroborated these findings by illustrating that punctual learners were more actively engaged in lessons and benefited from a more consistent and cohesive learning experience. Late-arriving learners, on the other hand, missed out on key instructional moments, which hampered their understanding and participation. This proved that the findings show gaps in their knowledge and lower academic engagement.

Influence of Learners' Regular Attendance on Teachers' Lesson Delivery and Classroom Management

The study investigated how learners' regular attendance patterns influenced teachers' lesson delivery and classroom management at the MPAP school. The semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with teachers provided significant insights into the challenges posed by irregular attendance patterns among learners.

3.2 Lesson Delivery Challenges

Teachers expressed frustration with the need to repeatedly review and reteach content to accommodate learners who missed previous lessons due to irregular attendance. This disrupted the flow of lessons, limiting the teachers' ability to cover planned materials effectively. As one teacher explained:

"It's hard to keep lessons flowing when many learners are absent or arrive late. I often have to repeat explanations, which cuts into the time meant for planned content. This constant backtracking slows the class and limits opportunities for deeper discussions or interactive learning. As a result, even punctual learners



miss out on more engaging or advanced parts of the lesson, which affects the overall quality of instruction." (T2).

3.2.1 Classroom Management Issues

Irregular attendance and late arrivals significantly affected teachers' ability to maintain a structured and focused learning environment. Teachers noted that these disruptions made it challenging to keep learners engaged and on task, often leading to more time being spent on managing behaviour than delivering instruction. As a teacher described:

"The constant disruptions from latecomers and absentees make it hard to keep the learners focused and on task. I end up spending more time trying to manage behaviour than teaching. When learners arrive late, they often distract others by asking what they missed or shuffling around to settle in, breaking the class's momentum. Additionally, frequent absences mean I have to reteach material or adjust lesson plans, which slows down progress for the entire group." (T2).

3.2.2 Differentiated Instruction Demands

Addressing different levels of student understanding resulting from irregular attendance places additional strain on teachers, which requires significant effort in modifying instructional strategies. As one teacher shared:

"I have to constantly modify my lessons to cater to the different needs of learners who have missed out on previous content. It's very taxing and takes away from providing quality instruction to the whole class." (T1).

3.2.3 Disruption to Active Learning

Classroom observations confirmed that attendance-related challenges consumed a considerable portion of instructional time, with teachers frequently pausing lessons to address issues such as taking attendance, managing late arrivals, and providing individual support to learners who had missed prior content. This disruption reduced opportunities for engaging learners in active learning and delivering the level of feedback necessary for effective instruction. As the headteacher highlighted:

"When learners are constantly missing classes or coming in late, it's really hard for the teachers to keep the lesson going smoothly. The teachers have to stop and go back to explain things again, and that takes away from the time they have to actually teach the content within the instructional time. This not only slows down the pace for everyone but also forces teachers to rush through later material, leaving some learners confused. Over time, these interruptions can even discourage teachers from incorporating interactive activities or discussions, as they're forced to prioritise covering the basics." (HT).

Challenges and Factors Influencing Learners' Punctuality and Regularity

The study explored the various factors influencing learners' punctuality and regular attendance At the MPAP school through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. These findings revealed a series of challenges and influences, which can be categorised into four main themes: socioeconomic and cultural factors, school-based policies and practices, learners' perceptions and motivations and peer and individual influences.

3.3 Socioeconomic and Cultural Factors

Socioeconomic challenges emerged as significant barriers to learners' punctuality and regular attendance. Issues such as poverty, distance to school, and family responsibilities were frequently cited. For instance, a learner shared:

"Sometimes I have to help my parents with chores or work in the fields before I can come to school, and that makes me late. By the time I finish my tasks and walk to school, the first lesson has already started, and I miss important instructions. Even though I try my best to catch up, I often feel tired and distracted, which makes it harder to focus in class." (L5).

Financial constraints also made reliable transportation to school difficult, with many learners relying on public transit or walking long distances, which contributed to tardiness and absenteeism. Also, our findings revealed that cultural attitudes further exacerbated attendance issues. Gender norms, in particular, influenced attendance patterns, as some learners explained that their families prioritised the education of male siblings over female siblings. This finding aligns with learners' reports that girls were often expected to prioritise domestic responsibilities, such as household chores or childcare duties, over their schooling, which led to higher rates of absenteeism and lateness.

3.3.1 School-Based Policies and Practices



Attendance monitoring systems and school policies played a notable role in shaping punctuality and regular attendance behaviours. Learners and teachers highlighted the importance of robust systems for tracking attendance and following up on absences, with the headteacher stating that:

"The way we keep track of attendance and communicate with parents about it really makes a difference. The learners know we take it seriously, and this encourages them to prioritise punctuality. When parents are regularly informed, whether through messages, meetings, or progress reports, they can reinforce the importance of attendance at home. Over time, this consistent collaboration between school and families helps build a culture of responsibility and commitment among learners." (HT).

However, there were concerns about inconsistencies in monitoring attendance, with some participants citing a lack of enforcement and inadequate follow-up efforts, which failed to encourage consistent attendance. Also, participants expressed the need for more targeted support structures, such as counselling and mentoring programs, to address the main causes of irregular attendance and lateness.

3.3.2 Learners' Perceptions and Motivations

Learners' perceptions of the value and relevance of education had a profound impact on their attendance patterns. Those who considered education vital to their future goals and aspirations exhibited higher levels of punctuality and regular attendance. As one learner expressed:

"I know that coming to school on time and every day is important for my future, so I make sure I do it. Being punctual helps me stay focused, build good habits, and show my teachers that I take my education seriously. If I ever feel tempted to skip or arrive late, I remind myself that every lesson counts and that my efforts today will pay off tomorrow." (L8).

Again, motivation and self-regulation were also highlighted as key influences. Learners who lacked intrinsic motivation or struggled with self-discipline often found it difficult to prioritise coming to school or class on time and attending school regularly.

3.3.4 Individual and Peer Influences

Some learners reported that peer pressure significantly influenced their attendance. Those whose friends frequently arrived late or skipped school were more likely to adopt similar behaviours, as irregular attendance became normalised within their peer groups. Conversely, learners surrounded by punctual peers were more likely to develop consistent attendance habits. This suggests that peer networks can function as both risk and protective factors. These findings underscore the complex interaction of socioeconomic and cultural constraints, school practices, learner motivation, and peer influence. Addressing attendance challenges requires collaborative efforts from schools, families, and communities to promote punctuality and regular attendance as shared responsibilities.

4. Discussion

The findings from this study strongly validate punctuality as a key determinant of academic success, with important implications for educational policy and classroom practice. A strong positive correlation emerged between learners' timeliness and their academic performance, particularly in standardised assessments, supporting earlier research by Gottfried (2019) and the OECD (2023). Notably, this relationship held even after controlling for socioeconomic status, prior achievement, and school resources, indicating that punctuality is an independent predictor of learning outcomes (Duckworth et al., 2021). These findings align with Adane's (2013) framework, which views punctuality as more than time management—it reflects key non-cognitive traits like conscientiousness, self-regulation, and respect for institutional norms, all vital foundations for academic achievement (Farrington et al., 2012).

The findings are grounded in key psychological and educational theories. Skinner's operant conditioning (1953) explains how punctuality is reinforced through rewards, such as merit-based recognition, which improve attendance (Simonsen et al., 2008). Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) highlights the role of observational learning. Learners often adopt punctual habits when modelled by peers and teachers. Constructivist perspectives from Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1952) emphasise that punctuality enables full access to scaffolded learning within the "zone of proximal development," fostering cognitive growth. Hattie (2009) supports this view, noting that punctual learners benefit more from peer interaction and structured instruction.



The socioeconomic dimensions of punctuality expose significant inequities in educational access. While personal traits like self-discipline and motivation (Obiri Agyei, 2019; Dadzie, 2013) influence attendance, structural barriers pose major challenges. UNICEF (2023) reports that nearly 40% of learners in developing regions face transportation difficulties, with girls particularly affected due to safety concerns (Global Partnership for Education, 2022). Additionally, children in low-income households often manage chores or sibling care before school (Heymann & Earle, 2000). These findings reveal the limitations of punitive responses to lateness and emphasise the need for context-sensitive, supportive interventions to address the root causes of attendance issues (Morrissey et al., 2014).

Improving punctuality requires a multi-tiered, ecosystem-based approach. At the school level, Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) have proven effective (Sugai & Horner, 2006), incorporating universal strategies like clear expectations, visual cues, and consistent routines (Sprick et al., 2019). Targeted interventions such as mentoring, attendance contracts, and family engagement (Epstein, 2018), along with intensive supports like case management and social service coordination (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012), further enhance outcomes. Community partnerships are also essential examples, including municipal "safe routes to school" initiatives (McDonald, Brown, Marchetti, & Pedrosa, 2013), business-sponsored attendance incentives (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004), and interagency family support (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). Beyond academics, punctuality has long-term benefits. Studies show punctual secondary learners are more likely to gain and retain employment (Deke & Haimson, 2006), reinforcing Becker's (1964) human capital theory and framing punctuality as a valued form of cultural capital. As nations pursue SDG 4 (UNESCO, 2015), punctual, equitable access to education remains essential for lifelong success.

The study's findings highlight the significant impact of regular learner attendance on effective teaching and classroom management. A strong relationship was found between consistent attendance, optimal use of instructional time, and smoother classroom dynamics. This supports earlier research by Agbobbie (2016) and Sackey (2007), which showed that absenteeism and lateness disrupt lessons, requiring teachers to repeat content, adjust plans, and manage behavioural issues, reducing time for new learning and student engagement. Qualitative data also revealed that frequent absences limit opportunities for feedback, active learning, and individual support. According to constructivist theorists like Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1952), consistent attendance supports learning through social interaction and continuity.

Irregular attendance undermines structured and engaging learning environments, intensifying classroom management challenges noted by Agbobbie (2016) and Sackey (2007). It disrupts routines, weakens teacher-learner relationships, and reduces student engagement. Teachers often adapt lessons for irregular attendees, a concern linked by Kumi-Yeboah and Amponsah (2023) to the need for culturally responsive pedagogy in diverse, disadvantaged settings. Regular attendance supports academic success and fosters inclusive classrooms. Addressing absenteeism requires tackling root causes such as poverty, household responsibilities, and cultural beliefs. Effective strategies include improved attendance tracking, stronger parent-school collaboration, teacher training, and comprehensive policies that support consistent learner participation and better learning outcomes.

This study offers a nuanced understanding of the complex factors influencing learners' punctuality and regular attendance at the selected school, building on and extending existing research on educational participation in Ghana. It identifies a multi-layered system of influences, individual, familial, institutional, and societal, that require targeted, context-sensitive interventions. Poverty remains a major barrier, consistent with Dadzie (2013) and Akyeampong & Rolleston (2018), as many learners engage in income-generating activities such as vending or farming before school, reflecting Mfum-Mensah's (2018) notion of "survival-schooling conflicts." This aligns with World Bank (2023) data showing 32% of secondary learners miss school weekly due to economic hardship. Transportation challenges were also notable, with learners walking 5–7 km through unsafe routes, echoing concerns by Balwanz and Darvas (2014) and Afutu-Kotey and Gough (2022). Gendered attendance barriers affirmed Ananga's (2013) findings while adding complexity. Female learners faced the "double burden syndrome" (Nukunya, 2022) of domestic chores and economic duties, and menstrual hygiene issues led to regular absences (Sommer et al., 2021). Cultural practices revealed an "aspiration-practice dissonance" (Appiah-Kubi, 2023), where education is valued yet interrupted by obligations (Agyemang & Ofori-Kusi, 2023).

Traditional gender norms and modern economic pressures intersected in complex ways. Contrary to Carter et al.'s (2020) findings of norm erosion, some families reinforced daughters' domestic roles to maintain cultural identity amid



urbanisation (Ampofo, 2023). However, the study also uncovered positive deviance, where girls leveraged extended family support to ease domestic burdens, pointing to potential intervention strategies (Adomako Ampofo & Prah, 2024). Within school systems, limitations emerged beyond the Ghana Education Service's (2020) framework. Although attendance tracking was in place, it often reflected "ritualistic compliance" (Chapman et al., 2023), lacking meaningful follow-up due to teachers' administrative overload (Akyeampong et al., 2023). Promising practices included teacher mentoring based on "contextualised care" (Schweisfurth, 2023), where strategies were adapted to local settings, such as linking attendance to communal routines like morning assemblies (Quansah et al., 2023). The study expanded Obiri Agyei's (2019) work by identifying instrumental, identity-based, and social belonging motivations. Peer influence, now shaped by social media (Osei-Assibey & Akussah, 2023), further highlighted the role of "bridge learners" as key attendance role models (Asante et al., 2023).

5. Conclusions

This study explored the relationship between learners' punctuality and regular attendance on teaching and learning outcomes among Basic 8 learners at the Millennium Precious Achievers Preparatory (MPAP) School. The study found a strong positive relationship between learners' punctuality and regular attendance and their academic performance and instructional effectiveness. Findings showed that consistent attendance and timely arrival strongly enhance academic performance, engagement, and curriculum tracking. Punctual learners demonstrated stronger academic outcomes and instructional effectiveness than their irregular peers. These findings align with global research highlighting attendance as critical to educational quality (OECD, 2023; Gottfried, 2019). Learners' attendance patterns were shaped by a mix of socioeconomic, cultural, institutional, and individual factors, particularly affecting those from disadvantaged backgrounds. By focusing on a semi-rural Ghanaian junior high school, the study addresses a gap in the literature and highlights how local contexts shape attendance-related outcomes. The findings call for context-sensitive, multi-dimensional strategies that view attendance not just administratively, but as central to educational equity, learner motivation, and teacher effectiveness.

6. Recommendations

The study recommends that GES strengthen school attendance policies by implementing robust monitoring systems with clear consequences for lateness and absenteeism, alongside positive reinforcement. Socio-economic supports, such as transport subsidies and community childcare programs, should target vulnerable learners, especially girls. The Millennium Precious Achievers Preparatory (MPAP) School should raise learner awareness on the importance of punctuality for academic and career success, build teacher capacity in managing attendance-related challenges, and enhance parental and community involvement to support consistent school attendance.

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