

The Effect of Illegal Mining on School Attendance and Academic Performance of Junior High School Students in Upper Denkyira West District of Ghana

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Abstract

This study assessed the effect of illegal mining on school attendance and academic performance of junior high school students in the Upper Denkyira West District of Ghana. Descriptive survey was used for this study and research instruments used were questionnaire and interview. Thirty teachers and 150 students making 180 respondents were used for the study. Stratified random technique was used to select the five schools in the district and the respondents were selected through simple random sampling technique. Findings of study has revealed that indeed illegal mining activities partake by students do have negative effect on school attendance and academic performance and it was established that students who come to school regularly perform tremendously while the absenteeism students perform poorly . The study recommended the implementation of the New Educational Reform and Free-Compulsory Universal Basic Education, parents teachers must educate their wards and students on the importance of education and Parents must be made aware that it is their responsibility to bear the cost of their children's needs.

Keywords: education, illegal mining, student's performance, academic work, Ghana

1.0 Introduction

Mining is the extraction of minerals and precious metals from the earth. These minerals and metals consist of manganese, tantalum, copper, tin, silver, diamonds and gold. Mining may be considered in two forms: large scale mining and small scale mining.

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Large scale mining generally employs large number of people and produces huge tonnes of gold. Examples of these are the Anglo-Gold Ashanti of Ghana, Newmount Ghana, Goldfields Ghana and Minas Serra Pelade Mines in Brazil which employed about over thousands workers and yielded thousands tonnes of gold to the present.

Small scale mining is a form of mining that is done at small levels and mostly employs relatively a low number of people (Appiah, 1998). It is generally engaged in by local people within the area where these activities occur, and comes along with it the influx of people from other areas. Small Scale Mining companies use a considerable number of the labour force in the country. While there is no accurate SSM employment number for Ghana (Appiah, 1998), it is estimated that some 500,000 people are openly employed in the sector while additional 500,000 may indirectly be benefiting from the doings. About half of those directly engaged in the SSM are said to be illegal operators (Amankwah & Anim-Sackey, 2003) commonly known as "galamsey operators". The actions of small-scale miners also generate economic linkages with other sectors of the economy helping as raw resources for goldsmiths and jewellers.

There are two main forms of small scale mining; these are land dredging and river dredging. In the former, miners use generators to dig large holes in the ground to expose the gold bearing layer of the sand and clay. The slurry is then pumped into a sluice box which collects the gold particles. The tailings flow into an adjacent tailings dam or a mining pit in adjacent area, usually a forestland. With the river dredging, miners move along the river on a platform or in a boat. A hydraulic suction hose then suctions the gravel and mud along the river. These go through a tailing, and gold fragments are collected on felt mats. The remaining wastes may be released into the river, thereby causing enormous environmental damage to the water body.

In Ghana, the mining subsector of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources previously the Ministry of Mines and Energy is the state institution that oversees the mining industry. The environmental aspects of mining are directly regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency Council Act (EPAC act of 1974) and Mining Regulations. According to Acquah (1995) the Minerals and Mining Law of 1986 made provision for environmental protection and pollution prevention.

Small scale mining may be legal (registered) or illegal (not registered). Where they are registered there is some level of supervision, hence moderate consideration for environmental concerns (Iddirisu & Tsikata, 1998). Nevertheless, much destruction is done to the environment in the sense that activities done here are more vigorous and relatively higher. In situations where small scale activities are not registered, there is no monitoring, hence these miners are left unchecked, and the degraded environment receives no remediation.

The mining activity in the Upper Denkyira West District is dominated by small scale mining operations and majority of the population is predominantly farmers growing both cash and food crops. Mining activities in the district contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of the people.

A great deal of Ghana's success in growing enrolment has been counteracted by high drop-out rates and even though there is a close to gender parity in admittance to school at lower levels, transition rates to junior and senior high school don't show as much promise. This implies that Ghana is probable of missing the 2015 MDG goals of universal access for all children.

Various governments had paid much attention to increase school enrollment, attendance and academic performance within the various districts of Ghana. Recent progress inspires hope of further progress. At the same time, if the future is to be better than the past, we must also identify new and persistent challenges. For human development to contribute to national development, improving learning outcomes for the poorest half of Ghanaian children offers a key opportunity and challenge. To give meaning to the access and participation component of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education programme, the Ghana Education Service has made a lot of inroads in the area of infrastructural provision for schools at the dawn of the 21st Century. It is an established fact that those employed in the small scale mining in this district are mostly either illiterate or semi-literate.

These miners appear to attract their young ones of schools age into the mining activities either as a means of offering a helping hand or as a kind of training them to be able to take up from them when they retire. To aggravate the problem, it appears these students themselves have not concluded whether they will attend school or not and finally end up in the illegal mining activities. They also have the quest for money and riches.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Over the past three decades, falling standards in education have been a matter of great concern for all stakeholders in education. There are several opinions on the causes of the falling standards of education, whilst some blame teachers for not putting in the required effort; others think absenteeism on the part students is the problem. Another school of thought believes that both parents and students do not pay particular attention to education and for that matter school performance is not taken into effective consideration. Again it is believed that people are not given opportunity to deal with financial constraints on the part of parent. Others are made to start paying their own school fees at all tender age because they engage in illegal mining activities alongside schooling.

One cannot underscore the great impart education would have brought to the mining sector but notwithstanding it appears stakeholders have paid little attention to the effect illegal mining activity has on school attendance and academic performance of the people of the Upper Denkyira West District. In furtherance of this, it is alleged that some of the children who become dropouts are a result of truancy which is becoming a social evil to the society by practicing all forms of social vices such as drug abuse, armed robbery among others. In spite the significant function the small scale mining activities play in district and the country as a whole, it is believed to have a retrogressing effect on school attendance and academic performance. It has therefore become a critical concern to look into the effect of the illegal mining on school performance in junior high school.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Generally objective this study was to examine the effect of illegal mining on school attendance and academic performance of junior high school students in the Upper Denkyira West District of Ghana.

The study however specifically aims at the following;

1. To assess the general attitude of parents and guardians towards education in the Upper Denkyira West District of Ghana.
2. To examine why parents and guardians push their young ones of school going age into the illegal mining activities.

3. To determine the factors discouraging the interest of the children from schooling to illegal mining activities.
4. To ascertain if school environment encourages school attendance and academic performance.

1.3 Research Question

The following are the research questions the study focused on:

1. What are some of the general attitude of parents and guardians towards education in the Upper Denkyira West District of Ghana?
2. Why parent and guardians push their young ones of school going age into the illegal mining activities?
3. What are the factors discouraging the interest of the children from education to illegal mining activities?
4. How does school environment encourage school attendance and the academic performance?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Small scale mining activities

Operations of small-scale mining are usually done on the surface or near surface or near surface deposits, relatively little waste or overburden, simple metallurgy and easy access. Most also involves the use of mercury for processing (Hilson, 2001).

According to Berger (1982), it is characterised by: one-man operations; various forms of leasing or distributing where miners either share the profit with the owner of the concession or selling the mineral to the owner of the concession at an agreed price; joint ventures and co-operatives; hired labour on the basis of wages payments; distribution and sales commonly involve middlemen who after sell to the world markets.

Several gold belts cover Ghana's land surface. The first belt, covering about 15-40km in width, contains the Birimian gold. Birimian gold is found in supracrustal West African rocks extending from Ghana to as far as Burkina Faso in the north, and Senegal and Mauritania in the western parts of the region.

The belt contains such fine gold as proterozoic greenstone-type lobe gold deposits. This is variably complex, and occurs as quartz-filled shear zone and altered shear zone forms (Leube *et al.*, 1990). The Tarkwaian gold is found in the second gold belt. About 90% of this gold belt comprises Vein-quartz-pebbles and auriferous pebble deposits. Quartzite and phyllite particles constitute the remaining 10% (Hammond & Tabata, 1994).

Due to the mineral rich contents of the Ghanaian soil, huge monies are accrued from the modern Ghanaian small scale mining industry. Good amount of gold either in fine particle forms or lump forms, are mined from small scale mining sites across the nation (Appiah, 1998). Generally, wealthy persons buy some acres of land after prospects are made on them to assess the level of their gold mineral deposits. The mineral is very costly. A small part of it may sell millions of cedis hence the vigorous involvement of the youth.

The prospectors then high men and pay them wages (daily, weekly or specified days interval). Currently, a minimum average daily wage may support an unmarried young man or a woman's moderate expenditure for at least four days, though the specific amount paid may differ widely from place to place. However, small scale miners hardly economize. Thus, a day's wage may be spent on that particular day with very little or no amount kept. It is worth noting though, that few people involved enter this business with specified aims.

Another important factor that makes the modern small scale mining a lucrative business is the high demands for gold and golden products both on the local and international markets (Hilson, 2001). A licensed operator may employ between five to twenty groups of tributes made up of between five to ten workers. Each group excavates the ore to process the mineral. Usually the contributors keep two-thirds of the profit and give the remaining one-third to the concessionaire (Appiah, 1998).

Small scale mining activities in Ghana employ very simple implements and devices such as pick-axes, shovels, mattocks, sluice boxes and cutlasses. In some few instances, mechanized machineries such as washing plants, Honda water pumps and explosives are employed (Hilson, 2001). Nonetheless, small scale mining sites of such mechanized machineries operate largely rudimentarily. Generally, the processes involved in small scale gold mining are crushing the ore into pebbles or powder under various stages, washing the crushed sediments with washing blanket or hands along riverbanks to separate the mineral, and panning (Hilson, 2001).

The main method small-scale gold miners usually adopt for processing ores is by gravity concentration (Aryee *et al.*, 2003). This refers to the use of mineral particles by sorting the relative density, particle size, shape, and differences in the medium (water, air or other relative density of the liquid) in the rate and direction of movement is different from each other so that the beneficiation methods. Aryee *et al.* (2003) further state that in processing alluvial ores, a traditional ore processing method, which yields a recovery rate of almost 60%, involves the sluicing or washing of mined material in a sluice box to acquire gold concentrate. Mercury is then introduced to the concentrate and mixed to form a gold amalgam, then heated to separate the gold.

2.2 School attendance rate of students

The new Webster's Dictionary (1976) defines attendance as "the act of habitual practice of attending or being present". School attendance therefore refers to the habitual practice of act of being present at school. The "gross" school attendance rate represent the number of children regardless of age in a given country that are in attendance in a specific school level, such as primary or secondary, divided by the total number of children in the country that are of official age of that level of schooling. As such 'gross' attendance rates can exceed 100 percent. The generally suggests that either those children are not in school at the official age or that children are repeating years of schooling.

The 'net' school attendance rate is the number of children of the official age of a schooling level who are in attendance at that level, divided by the total number of children in the country that are of the official age for that level of schooling. Unlike 'gross' attendance, 'net' attendance cannot exceed 100 percent.

Attendance rates to school are often used as indications of positive a tool for monitoring. Whilst truancy is frequently a feature of pupil's debate, there is a lack of available data on its frequency. It is possible to infer over all trends that showed a gradual increases in attendance rates from the dip experienced in the year following the raising of the school leaving age. According to him, these surveys, however, were not able to distinguish between absence due to illness and absence due to trancies and therefore, can only provide a general indication of improved 'average' attitude such as the proportion of pupils chosen to remain beyond statutory leaving age or a further education college.

Under the new system of education in Britain, attendance has been made compulsory for children in the age group of 6 to 18. It is the responsibility of guardians to send their wards to school. Mortimore explains, the food for education programme (2002) is promoting attendance and reducing dropout rate. At the same time, distributing staple foods to families in return for their children's school attendance and this improve household security.

2.3 Society Attitude towards Education

Research has established that parental attitude and encouragement has a great deal of weight on students' education and height of success attained in education. Parents and community attitudes towards education are largely influenced by traditional beliefs. Ghanaian children continue to face barriers to accessing and completing education that result in drop-out, whereby children fail to complete their full cycle of basic education.

Canagarajah & Coulomb (1998) state the families have a role to play in a child's decision to school or work. Father's education has a significant negative effect on child labour the effects is stronger for girls than boy" to them estimations also show that father's with very high level of education are likely to have a negative effect on the livelihood of working while mothers education seems to influence only schooling participations than working.

Canagarjah & coulomb (1998) further emphasis that "the presence of at home is likely to effect the child's likelihood of going to school as opposed to work".

Chernichously (1985) states that "it has been argued in the past that ages and presence of gender of siblings have a strong effect on schooling and work pattern of members of the household". In a survey conducted by Brandon (1994), it was found that in the school equation, there is a positive marginal effect on school participation. As subjects of undesirable socio-cultural expectations within the household and community, most girls take on much of the burden of sustaining the family in terms of labour, child-care and income generation, and are extremely vulnerable in the face of persistent poverty.

2.4 Effects of illegal mining on school attendance

The ILO has indicated that the prevalence of children in mining is growing. The Organisation's background document for the World Day Against Child Labour was on eliminating Child Labour in Mining and Quarrying (12th June 2005).

Children in mining have become a focus of attention as its links to many of the worst forms of child labour on the African continent which has become very obvious. Children are in mining for several reasons – family disintegration through poverty or HIV/AIDS as well as war and conflict; traditional expectations of children as income earners; negligence and premature independence from parental control. IPEC-ILO has undertaken a number of quite detailed studies into child labour in Ghana, as part of multi-nation studies.

Local communities at the fringes of mines have suffered and continue to suffer various degrees of adverse impact of mining operations. Some communities have suffered militaristic attacks, others have had their water sources polluted, their land destroyed, and many of them continue to suffer low and inadequate compensation packages. Concerns have also been expressed about inadequate housing, youth unemployment, family disorganisation, school dropouts, prostitution and drug abuse associated with the mining boom. In most cases these impacts affect people of different age groups and gender differently.

Due to the sub-sectors' remoteness, informal character and mobility, the number of children involved in mining and quarrying activities is difficult to measure. However, the ILO estimates that nearly 1 million children under the age of 5 to 17 years of age work in the mines and quarries.

Saiduddin (2003) in his study of junior high students stipulates that there is a positive correlation between achievement and attendance. One article explains, "When many are absent or chronically tardy, achievement levels suffer" (p.1). Moore (2005) explains that the results of his research signify that enhanced rates of class attendance were connected to enhanced academic performance and the stresses on the academic remuneration of class attendance were also efficient. Roby (2004) in his study of attendance and achievement in Ohio schools believes the positive impact of fine school attendance on academic attainment might be superior than people have in the past believe.

Gump (2005) identified a tough negative correlation between absences and final grades. Furthermore he says that students who desire to succeed academically ought to attend class, and that teachers must promote attendance. Marburger (2006) said that there is a positive correlation between exam performance and attendance.

2.5 Government policy on School Attendance

The development of education in Ghana since independence has been and continues to be guided by various education acts and programmes, the most fundamental being the Education Act of 1961. The Education Act of 1961 is the principal legislation on the right to education and its states in section 2(1):

"Every child who has attained the school going age as determined by the Minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the Minister in a school recognised for the purpose by the Minister."

The 1992 Constitution gives further impetus to the provision of education as a basic right for all Ghanaians. Article 38 sub-section 2 states: *"The Government shall within two years after parliament first meets after coming into force of this constitution draw up a programme for the implementation within the following ten years for the provision of a free, compulsory universal basic education"*.

In 1996 the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme was launched. This is a 10- year programme (1996 – 2005) designed to establish the policy framework, strategies and activities to achieve free and compulsory basic education for all children of school going age. Before 2002 Pre-School Education was not part of the formal system; it was introduced as a result of recommendation made by the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms (October, 2002).

Article 39 (1) stated that *'the state shall provide educational facilities at all levels and in all regions of Ghana, and shall to the greatest extent feasible make these facilities available to all citizens'*. Articles 38 (3c) also indicates government intension of providing a lifelong education. The over objective education policy as spelt out by the vision 2020 document is: *"to ensure that all citizens regardless of gender or social status are functionally literate and productive at the minimum"* to provide relevant education to all Ghanaians to make them functionally literate, productive and acquire the necessary skills to cope successfully in the modern world".

This, the government believes would productively increase the earning of labour force and literate population, increase female literate, employable skills population able to cope with modern trends in science and technology and increase stakeholders participation in education.

The 1998 convention on the rights of the child further states that the ministry of education is chosen approach for achieving this particularly for pre-tertiary education which is the 'whole school development concept'. This concept consists of activities and policies planned with schools, communities in response to their expressed needs. Ghana is signatory to the international convention of the rights of the child that declared education a right of every child of school age. The ministry of education has long been aware that education is a basic right in Ghana.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Study Design

Descriptive survey was applied to this study. This involved the application of questionnaire in an attempt to collect data for answer the research questions formulated for the research. Observations which form a crucial component of descriptive survey were also used. The research used this design because it has the merits of giving good amount of responses from wide range of teachers and students. It also supplies more accurate picture of activities. The main demerit was that the design was time and money consuming. All the same, it suited the research more than any other design.

3.2 The Study Population

The target population consists mainly of male and female students and teachers in all junior high school in the Upper Denkyira West District. In all, 5 Junior High Schools were selected with a total population of 380 students because it was realized that the others schools have the same characteristics.

3.3 Sample technique and sample Size

The sample for the study consisted of five (5) government assisted junior high school in the Upper Denkyira West District, out of the 380 students from these five selected schools, and 150 students were sampled for the study.

The teachers involved in the study were 30 from the five selected schools thereby making the total sample size to be 180. The researcher used stratified random technique was used to select the five schools in the district. The respondents were selected through simple random sampling technique.

3.4 Research Instrument

The main research instruments used were questionnaire and interview because of the nature of the study and the study participant involved.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

For the analysis, descriptive and analytical methods were used. The major areas of the questionnaire were considered one after the other. Teacher's responses to each item were worked out into percentage out of which table were drawn. From the table drawn, one can easily ascertain the general standpoint of respondents of each question. The tables also give the opinion of all the respondents from the various schools in the study area. Having presented the results in this manner, each item in the questionnaire was taken and discussed to bring out how varying views were put up on each item.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Results and discussion on teachers

4.1.1 Gender distribution

Table 1 depicts the gender distribution of the respondents. Sixty percent of teachers were males and 40% were females.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Male	18	60
Female	12	40
Total	30	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

4.1.2 Age of respondents

From Table 2, concerning the ages of the teachers sampled, respondents within the ages of 20 – 30 constitute 40%, and those between the ages of 31 – 40 were 20% and teachers within the ages of 41 – 50 representing 26.7%. Teachers ranging from 51-60 are 13.3%. This means that majority of the teachers are youth within the ages of 20-40 years representing 60% and are very active.

Table 2: Age of Teachers

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	12	40
31-40	6	20
41-50	8	26.7
51-60	4	13.3
Total	30	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

4.1.3 Marital status of the teachers

Majority if the teachers were married and they constituted 60% with single and divorced being 30% and 10% respectively.

4.1.4 Classes assigned to teachers

Most of the teachers who responded to the question were teaching the class of junior high school 2 and 3. The respondents teaching at the J.H.S. 1 constituted 20% of the respondents. Respondents representing 40% teach at J.H.S. 2 and another 40% teaching at J.H.S

4.1.5 Number of years teaching at present school and size of class

Respondents were asked to state the number of years they have spent in their present school. From the data, 20% of the teachers have taught for one to five years, 60% have taught for 6 to 10 three years and 11 years and above is 20%. From the teachers sampled, those having more than 25 students in class represented 26.7%. Class with 20 -24 students represented 60% of the respondent and the number of students s ranging from 10-19 were 13.3%.

4.1.6 Number of students whose parents are engaged in illegal mining.

The data indicates that students whose parents engage in illegal mining activities were 30%. Majority of the people within the district are farmers. This vividly influences the students to engage themselves in the mining activities to get money and will affect their school attendance and academic performance.

4.1.7 Attendance rate to school during peak season of illegal mining

The study sought to find out the attendance rate of students to school during illegal mining peak seasons. From Table 3, Sixty percent of the respondents said more than 15 students do not attend school during peak mining seasons and another 30% said 10 to 14 students do not attend school during the seasons. Also, 10% also said about 1-9 students do not come to school during the peak of illegal mining activities. This clearly demonstrates that that students' attendance rate to school reduces during peak season of illegal mining seasons. Question was asked if parents come to school to call their wards Out of Classes. All the respondents representing 100% said say "No" indicating that parents do not come to school campus to call their wards out of school.

Table 3: School attendance during peak season of illegal mining

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1-10	3	10
11-14	9	30
15 and above	18	60
Total	30	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

4.1.8 When do Guardians pay their wards' examination printing?

This question sought to find out when guardians pay school examination fees as basic education is free. Twenty percent of the respondents said guardians pay this for fee for their wards at the beginning of the term, 30% of guardians pay fees during the middle of the term. Forty percent of respondents said parents or guardians pay school fees when wards are sacked and 60% said parents do not pay at all unless their children are sacked from school.

We can say that majority of patients and guardians wait till their children are sacked from school before they pay the fees and this would eventually affect school attendance and academic performance.

4.1.9 Teachers' perception on students' views on education.

Teachers' view on students' perception on education in the community. Out of the number, 50% said these students viewed education as a requirement in life and 40% of them said students viewed education as a pressure from their parents and 10% said students have other views on education as a pressure from their parents to come to school.

4.2.0 Teacher and students' relationship

The study found out the relationship between teachers and students, 80% of teachers indicated that cordial relationship exists between teachers and students and 20% also indicated that teacher student relationship is strict and not cordial. This means that teacher students' relationship in these communities must be strengthened to promote efficient cordial relationship.

4.2.1 Effect of illegal mining on school Attendance and academic performance

The study again sought the effect of illegal mining activities on school attendance and academic performance. From all the respondents (100%) stated that the illegal mining activities with other challenges like poverty, distance to school, broken home among others have negatively affected school attendance and academic performance This means that illegal mining activities have a great effect on school attendance and performance

4.2.2 Causes of students' involvement in illegal mining and jobs pupils do

One the causes of pupils' involvement in illegal mining activities from teachers' perspective, data showed that 50% of the respondents said students involve themselves in the illegal mining is owing to financial constraints of their parents. Thirty percent of the respondents said it is the students' desire for money and 20% said it is lack of parental control. It can be inferred from this that poverty is having an effect on school attendance and academic performance.

The respondents making 70% said they help in carrying sand and gravels. Twenty percent of the respondents said the students help in digging trenches and 10% stated that the pupils perform other labourer activities.

4.2.3 Reasons why pupils are irregular in school

The study sought to find out the factors contributing to pupils' involvement in illegal mining activities instead of attending school. It was found out that 70% of the respondents said the pupils involve themselves in illegal mining for their personal up keep and 30% said that they want to gain experience from the illegal mining. The data indicated that 80% of male students engaged in illegal mining activities and 20% females are also involved in illegal mining activities.

4.2.4 Teachers' view on academic performance of students

Question was asked on the academic performance of the pupils in their school examinations and final year examinations for junior high school manage by the West African Examination Council. From Table 4 clearly shows that the average academic performance of the students is 40% said by the teachers and 26.7% of the respondents said pupils perform poorly in their academic performance, 23.3% of the teachers said the academic performance of pupils is good and 10% of the respondents said the academic performance of pupils was excellent. Therefore, it was noticed that students who come to school regularly perform excellently and good while the absenteeism students perform poorly.

Table 4: Academic performance of pupils

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	3	10
Good	7	23.3
Average	12	40
Poor	8	26.7
Total	30	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

4.3 Findings and Discussion on students

4.3.1 Age of pupils

Table 5 indicates that majority of the respondents fall within age 13 – 14 years forming 60% of the total percentage. Age 10 – 12 had 30%, whilst 15 – 16 formed 10% of the respondents. Therefore any pupil who engages in illegal mining constitutes child labour.

4.1.1 Age of pupils

Table 5 reveals that 60% of the respondents were between the ages of 13 and 14, while those within the ages of 10-12 were 30% of the students were within the ages of 10-12 and 10% of the school pupils are with 15-16 years of age

Table 5: Age of pupils

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
10-12	45	30
13-14	90	60
15-16	15	10
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

4.3.2 Gender of Pupils

Table 6 depicts the gender distribution of the students. Males form 53.3% and females are 46.7%. This implies that we need to work hard to achieve gender equality in the education.

Table 6: Gender of Pupils

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Male	80	53.3
Female	70	46.7
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

4.3.3. Classroom absenteeism

A look at classroom absenteeism showed that 56% of the respondents were in J.H.S.3, 28% and 16% in J.H.S. 2 and J.H.S 1 respectively. This means that more students from J.H.S. 3 were sampled for the study as compare to other classes.

4.3.4 Students' parents occupation

Students' parents occupation was analysed and the result indicated 60% were farmers, 5% civil servants, 20% are in the non-formal sector and consisted of food sellers, traders, seamstress, artisan workers and 15% were in the illegal mining activities. This is obvious and affirms the fact some of the parents may influence their wards to indulge in the illegal activities.

4.3.3 Parents' payment of other school charges

The study sought information on period parent pay school examination and printing fees of their wards as there is no payment of tuition fees and progressive free education at the basic level of education in Ghana. Out of 150 respondents, 90 students who represent 60% said their parents pay these little charges only when they are sacked from school and 40 % said their parents do make the payment at the beginning of the beginning of the term.

4.4.4 Teachers' relationship with students

The study also analysed teachers' relationship with Students in school. Information from respondents showed that majority of respondents forming 85% stated that teachers relate to them fairly as compared with 15% who said there is no healthy relationship between them and the teachers.

4.4.5 Effect of school environment on students

On School environment, the study sought to find out if school environment has an effect on students' attendance and academic performance. The respondents representing 40% held the view that their school environment does not influence their school attendance and the majority, 60% also said the school environment influenced their school attendance and academic performance.

One can therefore, conclude that good school environment definitely encourages school attendance and academic performance.

4.4.5 Jobs students perform at illegal mining site

Pupils' job activities at the various illegal mining sites found out that 80% of the respondents said they help in carrying sand and gravels. 15% of the respondents also mentioned that they help in digging trenches and 5% of the respondents mentioned other labourer related activities.

4.4.6 Students' delight in mining activities

Pupils' delight in mining activities proved that 30% of respondents strongly agree and agree that pupils take delight in illegal mining activities in illegal mining activities and 70% of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree those pupils that pupils delight in illegal mining activities.

4.4.7 Causes of illegal mining involvement among students

Question also found out the reasons why pupils take part in illegal mining activities. Information showed that 92% of the respondents said they involved in illegal mining activities to earn money for their personal up keep and 8% said that they want to gain experience from the mining sector.

4.4.8 Time students use engage themselves in illegal mining

Time students use to engage themselves in the illegal mining activities showed that 96% of the respondents said those students involve use school hours to engage themselves in the illegal mining and 4% said they engage in the illegal mining after school hours and during weekends. This is a clear demonstration that almost all the students do the illegal mining during school hours and this affects school attendance and academic performance. The study also showed that Students prefer to be in school to illegal mining activities. Eighty five of the respondents said they prefer to go school and 15% also said they prefer to go into mining activities and stop schooling. Therefore, we need to provide counseling to students always and inform them on importance of education in general.

4.4.9 Students' views on academic performance of students

Finally, question was asked on the academic performance of the students in their internal examinations and final year examination for junior high school organised by the West African Examination Council. From Table 7, it clearly shows that the average academic performance of the students is 40% said by the respondents, 30% said pupils perform poorly in their academic performance, 20% of the pupils said the academic performance of pupils is good and 10% said the academic performance was excellent. It was learnt that students who come to school regularly perform excellently and good while the absenteeism students perform poorly.

Table 7: Academic performance of pupils

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	15	10
Good	30	20
Average	60	40
Poor	45	30
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

5.0 Conclusion

The study has revealed that indeed illegal mining activities done by students do have negative effect on school attendance and academic performance, but that notwithstanding, there are other causes like poverty, broken home, distance to school, inadequate parental control which also have great effects on school attendance and academic performance.

5.1 Recommendation

From the conclusion, it can be realised that the illegal mining activities indeed have negative effect on school attendance and academic performance. From the research, the following recommendations are offered.

- Parents and teachers must educate their wards and students on the importance of education and parents must provide their wards basic needs. This would motivate and rekindle students' interest in schooling and reduce the rate of absenteeism. Parents must be made aware that it is their responsibility to bear the cost of their children's needs including education.
- Again, teacher should be loving and receptive so as to encourage students who face challenges at home to approach them. They should also try and find out from students why they absent themselves from schools so that they can offer the necessary assistance and counselling to these students.
- Non-governmental organizations (N.G.Os.) should come to the aid of children whose parents cannot afford to pay their fees. This can be done when the school heads communicate regularly to the N.G.Os on the problems faced by the needy but brilliant students. This will motivate other students to take their studies serious.
- The various Districts Assemblies can also help by setting up educational funds which will assist needy students and also encourage parents to send their wards to school instead of engaging their wards in illegal mining activities.
- The traditional authorities and district assemblies can also assist by enacting bye-laws which prompt parents to see to it that their wards attend school regularly.
- The government can also help by providing the needed school materials regularly and check the illegal payment of unapproved fees on educational materials to enable school children to be in school.
- The implementation of the New Educational Reform and Free-Compulsory Universal Basic Education should be strengthened and implemented fully by the government to assist the education of pupils.
- Communities can also establish small-scale agro-processing industry to help raise the standard of living in for the people particularly those in deprived communities and districts.

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