FACTORS INFLUENCING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF FORM FOUR GEOMETRY STUDENTS AT AVILA HIGH SCHOOL NYANGA ZIMBABWE

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DEDICATION

To my beloved husband Zuvarashe Sydney and my one and only son Tawana Christian.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Much of my regards go to my supervisor Mr. Mhishi for his relentless support in my project. My spiritual advisor Fr Henry Wasosa I salute you for your encouragements were of greater importance to me. Tawana and Zuvarashe, I thank you guys you were my pillars of strength throughout the study period. My dear mother Estery, my sister Lizzie and the rest of the family I salute you always for you were always there in times of need. Above all I thank God who does abundantly above all that I ask for.
ABSTRACT

The research set out to investigate the factors influencing academic performance of form four Geography students at Avila High School in Nyanga district. The research was prompted by the recurrence of poor results in Geography at Ordinary level for the past four years the researcher has been teaching at Avila High School. A descriptive survey research design was used. Stratified random sampling was used to select a sample of the population. The sample comprised of form four girls and boys doing Geography at the school. The sample was made forty students, twenty males and twenty females. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires and face to face interviews. Factors ranging from those which are school based to those which are home based were found to be contributing to the poor performance in Ordinary level Geography by pupils at Avila High School in Nyanga District. Home based factors such as the home environment, socio-economic status of the parents, parental educational background, household sizes and school based factors such as availability of resources and learner attitudes were found to be contributing towards pupils’ poor performance in Geography at Ordinary level. Recommendations were given such as; Avila communities should work towards providing library facilities which cater for all students, internet facilities should also be provided at the school to widen the resource base for different subjects, parents must be encouraged to be proactive in their children’s learning, teachers should be encouraged to source materials other than the textbooks currently in use in most schools, teachers should be encouraged to continually seek to improve themselves professionally so that they keep abreast the changes that are taking place in the field of Geography.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the background of the study, that is, what prompted the need for the research. Also contained in this chapter is the statement of the problem, research questions, assumptions, significance, limitations and delimitations of the study. Key words and phrases are also defined in this chapter.

1.1 Background to the Study

Development of the education sector has been a long standing objective of the government of Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. Education is considered by various stakeholders and players as a basic need and a basic right.

The Zimbabwean education system is dominated by exam oriented teaching where passing exams is the only benchmark for performance. According to Battle and Lewis (2002), education plays a vital role in the development of human capital and is linked with an individual’s well being and opportunities for better living standards. This contributes to great leaders and manpower for the country that are responsible for the country’s economic and social development.

There is a growing concern about the lower levels of academic achievement of secondary school learners in Zimbabwe as shown by their performance in public examinations (Gordon, 1995). Monitoring of performance at the school is done through assignments, end of month tests and end of term tests which are set according to their grade level and following the national syllabi requirements. At Avila secondary school, the performance of form four students in geography for the past three years was below 15%, deteriorating every year clearly indicating the poor performance. All pupils take Geography at ‘O’ level at the school despite the fact that only a few pass with grade C or better. The majority perform dismally. Pupils take the subject because if passed it puts the student at a position of advantage when selecting combinations at advanced level since the subject fit in commercials, arts and sciences. Pupils therefore need to have prior background in the subject.
Therefore this research was a result of the observation made during the time of the teaching practice at Avila high school. Performance in geography among the form four students was poor. Pupils were given tests to assess their performance and a majority of them failed the tests. Three tests out of fifty were administered and out of the one hundred form four pupils only eight managed to score marks above half in all the three tests. The average mark for those who passed was fifty six percent (56%).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Performance in form four Geography has been poor in Zimbabwe and Avila high school is no exception. Between 2011 and 2014 pass rate in Geography at Ordinary level was in the range of five to fifteen percent. A number of community and school factors contributed to the low pass rates of six percent in 2011, eleven percent in 2012, fifteen percent in 2013 and twelve percent in 2014. Therefore this study sought to establish factors that contribute to the poor performance of form four students in Geography.

1.3 Aim of the Study

To assess factors that affect performance in ‘O’ level Geography in the school and in the community

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1) To assess performance of form four Geography students over three years (2012-2014)
2) To identify factors which influence form four performance in Geography
3) To identify strategies for improving performance in Geography O level

1.5 Research Questions

1) What is the nature of performance for form four Geography students at Avila high school?
2) What factors influence performance of form four students at Avila high school?
3) How can the performance for form four Geography students be improved?
1.6 Assumptions

1) Both boys and girls have the same level of performance in Geography
2) All form four pupils do Geography
3) All pupils will sit for their final Geography exam and the pupils covered are of the same ability

1.7 Significance of Study

- This study will help identify factors that affect performance of students and hence improve performance in Geography by form four students at Avila high school.
- Results provide information useful for educational administration in making decisions to improve performance and face classroom problems through teacher training programs.
- The study is also intended to facilitate an understanding as to why pupils fail Geography and suggesting possible solutions to the problems.

1.8 Limitations

- The time could not allow the research to be extended to other schools. From this, the results and findings of this research study may only be applicable to Avila high school.
- The research was also carried out during the 1st term which is a busy sporting and academic term hence making it difficult to meet the respondents as frequently as required.
- The researcher was self sponsored so the researcher had to improvise in cases where money was needed which might as well lead to the leaving of necessary activities that could bring about required results.

1.9 Delimitations

The study was carried out at Avila high school in Nyanga district of Zimbabwe and focused on performance of Form Four geography students. The school is a rural school. The research participants included equal numbers of boys and girls since it is a mixed sex school. Pupils used were also of mixed ability.
1.10 Definition of Terms

Geography – is the study of the earth and man and his relationship to his environment.

Performance - is the accomplishment of a given task measured against present known standards of accuracy and competencies

Academic performance- this is how well an individual has done cognitive and non cognitive tasks.

1.11 Summary

This chapter looked at the background of the study where the main focus was on factors that contribute to pupils’ poor performance in Geography at Ordinary level in Nyanga District. The research questions, significance of the study, the research problem, limitations and delimitations have been discussed. The chapter therefore, lays the foundation of the research study on factors that contribute to pupils’ poor academic performance in Geography at Ordinary level in Nyanga District.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to factors that influence form four student’s performance in Geography.

2.2 Classification of Factors

A number of studies have been carried out to identify and analyze the numerous factors that affect academic performance in various centers of learning. Crosnoe et al., (2004) stated that such factors may be categorized as student factors, family factors, school factors or peer factors. Farooq et al., (2011) however, divided the factors into external and internal classroom factors and stated that these factors strongly affect students’ performance. Internal factors were those factors found within the classroom and external factors were found outside the classroom either within the school or in the community. The environment can either be physical or socio-physical and they both have a direct or indirect relationship with students’ performance. Paul & White (1990) examined extracurricular activity participation in senior high school setting and found that extracurricular activities and academic performance were highly correlated. More involvement in school activities means a better grade point average.

2.3 Relationship between socio-economic status and student performance

Socio-economic status is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. Family socio-economic levels have positive correlations with students’ quality of achievement (Jeynes 2002). Students from families of low socio-economic status have been found to be less motivated for school achievement and are likely to have lower aspiration than their higher status peers (Jeynes 2002). Students with high levels of socio-economic status perform better than the middle class students and the middle class students perform better than those from low level socio-economic status (Garzon, 2006; Kahlenberg, 2006; Kirkup, 2008). Other studies have found that the achievement of students was affected by low socio-economic status level of their parents as it hindered the individual’s access to resources and sources of learning (Duke, 2000; Eamon, 2005; Lopez, 1995). The performance of students has also been linked to the kinds of
parent-child interactions which build into the child’s personality and the desire (or absence of desire) to perform exceptionally well in the academic sphere. Furthermore, the parents’ involvement in a child’s education increases the chances of a child’s academic success (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995).

In another study, Cook and Evans (2000) found that students from disadvantaged groups had poor academic performance and big households were taken as a proxy for disadvantage. The bigger the household size, the more strained the resources are. In support of this, Rouse and Barrow (2006) stated that the economically disadvantaged parents were less able to afford the cost of education of their children at higher levels and consequently the students do not work at their fullest potential.

Provisions from parents also contribute greatly to pupils’ performance. Polite (1994) highlighted that deficiencies in early childhood cause latent defects which only manifest themselves later in one’s adult life. Some parents fail to provide even the basics for their children and this will later in life affect their performance. Socio-economic status of parents show moderate to strong relationships with academic performance (Sirin, 2005), but these relationships are contingent upon a number of factors such that it is nearly impossible to predict academic performance using socio-economic status.

2.4 Importance of Access to Educational Resources at school

Student performances are linked to use of the library and level of parental education. The use of the library positively affected the student performance (Young 2006). In addition, Jeong (2005) found the use of the internet and the type of contents viewed having an effect on students’ academic performance. If pupils fully utilize the internet for academic purposes it contributed positively to their academic performance. Therefore the availability of enabling environment and facilities such as library and computer laboratory at an institution can improve student performance. This does not only apply to the student but may also be applicable to members of educational board as their impact on school administration becomes positive and facilitates professional development and student learning (Robert and Sampson 2011).

Learner’s backgrounds relating to the availability of educational resources such as books, computers, educational television channels, furniture, study environment and general home
support are crucial to the learners’ success (Sugahara et al., 2008). Pupils with access to the resources are therefore, in a better position to pass than those who can’t access the resources. Schools that are better equipped perform better than those without resources to use. Pupils develop a reading culture on their own when resources are availed to them and it starts at home then it is extended into the school.

Adel (2002) found that parental involvement in their children’s education has a direct bearing on their children’s performance. Involvement can be in the form of assistance in school work and also a close follow up on what transpires at school in their absence in terms of their children’s performance. Pupils would be encouraged by this hence they perform well. Educated parents can provide environments that suits best for academic success of their children. The academic performance of students heavily depends upon the parental involvement in their academic activities to attain the higher level of quality in academic success.

Haralambos and Holborn (2000) stated that a school should be an extension of the home. Whatever activities that take place in the school should be reinforced by support from home for it to be successful. In another study, Adel (2002) found that learners from unstable homes are generally emotionally disturbed and therefore tend to underperform in school. Those from stable homes are able to study on their own and are less reliant on the teacher and the few resources available in most schools. Therefore access to resources in the home environment is of paramount importance in academic achievement.

Card and Krueger (1996), Fuller and Clarke (1994) and Heyneman and Loxley (1983) identified the effects of physical and economic resources on academic achievement. Physical resources were categorized into: people, equipment, physical and economic resources. An analysis by Ferreira and Gignoux (2010) showed that family and school conditions affect at least 53% of students’ performance whilst a study by Demir’s (2009) showed that variables associated with the school only accounts for 4.3% of variance.

Some studies have also indicated that student achievement depends on the development level of a country as this affects the quality and quantity of available educational resources. To account for academic achievement of students, factors related to school is more effective in developing countries, and social background of students is more effective in developed countries (Fuller &
Clarke, 1994; Heyneman & Loxley, 1983). Adeogun and Osifila (2008) found positive relationships between academic achievement of students and physical, financial and material resources.

2.5 The relationship between classroom attendance and academic achievement

The relationship between student attendance and exam performance was first explored by Romer (1993) who showed that students’ academic performance depended on class attendance. Recently, the increase in financial constraints has led to the rise in the number of pupils taking online lectures and this has made it impossible or unnecessary for students to attend class. However, a study by Devadoss & Foltz (1996) showed that students who miss classes perform poorly compared to those who attend classes. Those who do not come to school on a daily basis miss a lot on what is covered daily hence they end up performing dismally.

Some educational experts argue that students who have not acquired an association between academics and life experiences do not feel that good school attendance is relevant to their future (Romer 1993). Good attendance is expected to achieve the expected aims and objectives of education whilst on the contrary poor attendance hinders academic achievement and promotes a poorly educated society and thus leads to many negative social issues.

2.6 Learning Preferences and Teaching Style

According to Reid (1995), learning preferences refers to a person’s natural, habitual and preferred way of assimilating information. This implies that individuals differ in the way they respond to different modes of instruction or study. It has been shown that a good match between students’ learning preferences and instructors’ teaching style have a positive effect on a student’s performance (Harb & Elshaarawi, 2006). In support of this, Felder (1993) stated that alignment between students learning preferences and an instructor’s teaching style leads to a better recall and understanding of concepts. Ayeni (2011) stated that teaching is a continuous process that involves bringing about desirable changes in learners through use of appropriate methods. Teaching methods work effectively when they suit learner’s needs.

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). A study by Gordon (1995) on under achievement by secondary school girls indicated that educators’ attitudes and
expectations had a significant influence on secondary school girls in Zimbabwe. Therefore gender can be a significant contributor to student achievement (McCoy, 2005). Davidoff (2007) also contended that girls as early as seven years of age, show low self-esteem and confidence in school work than boys and more self esteem in relation to their social abilities such as empathy.

In order to make the subject matter more understandable, Burmster (2006), stated that for some numerate subjects, some teachers resorted to teaching in the pupils’ mother tongue to improve clarity and simplicity because English is a second language and expression problems were highly prevalent. However, this has a negative bearing on the subject outcome because pupils will face challenges in expressing themselves in the examinations leading to poor performance. Teachers’ and pupils’ attitudes towards learning influence performance and negative attitudes results in failure.

2.7 Influence of proper guidance and peer pressure

Guidance from parents and teachers indirectly affects the performance of students (Hussain 2006). In some cases, students have problems of developing positive study habits and guidance is required to improve a student’s study habits and this is directly proportional to academic achievement. Well guided pupils perform well in exams although Conger (1991) asserted that every individual has a ceiling above which he/she will not able to profit from experience in a particular activity. In order to fit in their chosen social circles, pupils often select subject combinations based on what is socially acceptable to the peer group. Some students select subject combinations just to conform to their social group. This would in turn affect performance in subjects like Geography and Science depending on its social acceptability.

2.8 Pupil’s self concept

Self-concept is a person’s way of perceiving himself/ herself which may be either positive or negative as a result of self-evaluation (Mwanwenda 1995). Pupils with high self concepts tend to experience higher academic achievement than their counterparts with low self concepts because they feel hesitant and uncertain. Craven and Marsh (1996) suggested that academic success tends to reinforce subsequent self perceptions of academic capabilities and gains in academic achievement are unlikely to last unless there are also changes in academic self concept.
Brogan (1998) suggested that strong and negative emotions such as anxiety and depression are associated with under-achievement because they tend to reduce motivation to work while positive emotions such as excitement, happiness raised motivation and satisfaction leading to better academic achievement. Nature of achievement emotions are therefore determined by the learner’s competence and value beliefs appraisals.

2.9 Attitudes towards learning

Attitudes are learned throughout life and are held in the way children are socialized at home and at school (Gilman and Anderson, 2006). Children are good observers in many educational programmes as they can assess and easily copy the attitudes of those people around them and they become like those around them. Perception about the difficulties associated with numerate subjects has thus led some pupils having preconceived ideas about numerate subjects such as Geography and Mathematics. The negative attitude developed could thus result in pupils performing poorly hence low academic achievement. A positive attitude creates the zeal to learn among pupils and stimulates competition among them leading to high academic achievements.

2.10 Gender and learning

Gender refers to the socially constructed attributes, roles, values, responsibilities and needs connected to being masculine or feminine (CERMI, 2012). Henslin (2007) stated that gender entails the socio-cultural roles assigned to males and females, and are determined by society through its socialization agents, such as the family, peers or school. Thus, boys and girls learn to behave and act in certain socially prescribed ways. Henslin (2007) stressed that gender was a result of socially constructed ideas about the behaviors, actions and roles of a particular sex. Consequently, males and females’ gender identity determines how they are perceived and how they are expected to think and act as males and females. Research has shown that men perform better than women in certain settings while women out perform men in other settings (Haist, Wilson, Elam, Blue, & Fosson, 2000). Consequently, differential gender socialization of boys and girls tends to have a bearing on their behavior, including academic performance.

2.11 Summary

In summary, the study’s review of related literature highlighted several factors that contribute to pupils’ poor performance in Ordinary level Geography as researched internationally, regionally and locally. The impact of these factors raised is applicable to all learners of Geography.
regardless of the socio-economic background of the learners. From the international researches, it can be deduced that pupils’ poor performance in Geography is not a problem confined to Nyanga District in Zimbabwe, but the problem also exists globally, as highlighted by international and local level literature.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods that were used to identify factors influencing performance of Form Four Geography students at Avila High School in Nyanga. The chapter also focuses on the methodology, data collection procedure and instruments, sample and sampling techniques and the data presentation and analysis procedures.

3.2 Research Design.

Research design is an action plan for getting from here to there, where “here” may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered (Yin, 2003, Gall et al, 1996). A descriptive survey method was used as it includes a larger number of respondents through the use of questionnaires and interviews. Qualitative research was done in the form of interviews and quantitative research was done in the form of questionnaires. Secondary data sources were used to identify the previous performance of form four Geography students. In this case record books of assignments, end of month tests and end of term tests were used for individual marks.

The population of this study was one hundred, made up of fifty boys and fifty girls. The pupils were grouped into two strata which were one for boys and the other for girls. Stratification was employed so as to ensure equal representation among the sexes. Out of a total population of 105 pupils a sample of twenty boys and twenty girls was used. According to Best (1993), a sample is a small population selected for observation and analysis.

From the two strata simple random sampling was done to select the sample of pupils to be used. Pieces of paper written yes and no were used to select respondents. The papers were put in a hat and all pupils were asked to pick the papers whilst the hat was lifted up. This was done to reduce bias of pupils choosing the paper to pick after seeing what is written on it thereby increasing validity of the results. Validity according to McMillan (2006) it is the degree of which scientific explanation or phenomenon matches reality. Those who picked papers written yes in each stratum were taken as the sample. Questionnaires and interviews were administered on the selected students.
3.3 Data collection instruments

Data collection usually involves direct interaction on one on one basis or in group settings. In this study the researcher was the chief data collector aided by document analysis, questionnaire with open and closed ended items and personal interviews. The questionnaire and the checklist for the interviews are shown in appendix 1 and 2.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by respondents. They are usually in written form and respondents interpret and fill in their responses. Chiromo (2002) defines questionnaires as that form of enquiry which contains a systematically compiled and organized series of questions that are sent to the population samples. The questionnaire sought to obtain information about pupils which would possibly affect their academic performance and also highlight their current performance.

3.3.1.1 Advantages of a questionnaire

They offer a great anonymity as there is no face to face interaction between the respondents and the interviewer.

They give the respondents time to think and fill in or choose the best response without the influence of the researcher.

In some instances when sensitive questions are asked it helps to increase the likelihood of obtaining accurate information.

Large amounts of information can be collected from a large number of people in a very short period of time and in a relatively cost effective way.

3.3.1.2 Disadvantages of a questionnaire

The respondents may interpret the questions differently leading to subjectivity that is not acknowledged.

Not everyone who receives the questionnaire returns it, so there is a self selecting bias.
Respondents might skip questions which are important in drawing conclusions.

Validity also lacks in questionnaires.

### 3.3.2 Interviews

Goddard (1996) define interview as one on one verbal interaction between the researcher and the respondents. The purpose of the interview is to find out what is in someone’s mind through an exchange of ideas and information. Through interviews information on attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and understanding of the problem being investigated can be obtained. Interviews help in information, decision making and resource allocation (Blooms 1995). Interviews can be structured or unstructured. They are used to obtain information directly from the pupils on the factors that influence their performance in Geography.

#### 3.3.2.1 Advantages of interviews

They provide the opportunity to explore concepts in depth.

The interviewer has the opportunity to clarify questions, thus the likelihood of getting relevant answers.

Respondents’ actual words are recorded.

They are useful to obtain detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions and opinions.

They deal with sensitive issues that people may feel uncomfortable to discuss in groups and so helps in giving information that may be personal.

#### 3.3.2.2 Disadvantages of interview

There might be interviewer bias, where by the interviewer ask questions that he want respondents to give certain answers (Blooms, 1995).

They can be costly.

They can be time consuming in setting up, interviewing, transcription, analyzing and feedback and reporting.
3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The school authorities granted a written permission for the research to be conducted in response to an introductory letter from Bindura University of Science Education seeking permission to conduct the research.

As a way of reducing disruption in the teaching and learning process at the school, Wednesday afternoon sessions were used to gather information because this session is dedicated for general cleaning. A sample of thirty respondents was identified. The researcher secured the consent of the respondents by explaining all the important details of the study. Respondents were assured of confidentiality in the research therefore no name or personal information was going to be disclosed to anyone.

3.5 Questionnaire

The researcher designed questionnaires for the form four Geography students randomly selected to take part in the research. The students would fill in their responses on the factors that affect their performance in Geography and how best they think their performance can improve positively. Thirty pupils answered the questionnaires.

3.6 Personal Interviews

Structured personal interviews were carried out to establish an in-depth of the pupils’ attitude towards the subject, teacher’s efforts and their own efforts they are putting to improve their performance. Ten pupils were interviewed.

3.7 Data Presentation and Analysis

Data analysis and presentation enabled showed the patterns, themes, new ideas and in general to have a better understanding of the topic under study. Raw data was transformed into final description, narration or themes. Data generated from questionnaires and interviews was reviewed, analyzed and interpreted into themes and meanings laid foundations for codification. This resulted in an integrated interpretation of the findings.
3.8 SUMMARY

The chapter outlined the research methodology of the study. Each instrument used in the research project was analyzed and its strengths and weaknesses identified. The instruments selected were used to gather data on the possible causes of pupils’ poor performance in Geography at Ordinary level at Avila High School. The qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to access information that affects pupils’ performance at school as well as at home. Some of the issues were not related to the research question but were relevant to the problems of the pupils’ performing poorly in Geography at form four level. The researcher was satisfied that the necessary data was collected through questionnaires and individual interviews. This chapter helped in the gathering of data relevant to the research study.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.0: Introduction

This chapter shows the presentation of results, analysis and interpretation of data collected in chapter 3. Data is illustrated and explained in the form of tables, pie charts, frequency tables and histograms so as to make it clear and easier to interpret, analyze and to make comparisons.

4.1 Performance of pupils

A pre-test was given to assess level of performance of pupils. This was combined with the previous term results in the subject for comparison before making the final conclusion on the nature of performance. Table 1 shows performance of pupils (all form fours) in the (previous term) term 1 before the research and the test that was written just before the research. Possible mark is 100% and marks have been grouped into a range of 10%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score range/100</th>
<th>Previous term marks (Number of pupils %)</th>
<th>Test before research (number of pupils %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 show the score range in percentages in the two tests. Only a few pupils scored marks above 50%. In the two tests only eight pupils scored marks that were above half. The majority of the students in the class scored below half which clearly indicates they were facing challenges in Geography. This led to the assumption that pupil’s performance in ‘O’ level geography at Avila high school is poor and a further analysis was done.
4.2 Home environment and parental involvement

All pupils in the sample responded to the question on whether they get help on their homework from their parents at home or not. Results showed that home environments of most of the respondents were not of much assistance to the learners. There were varying levels of parental involvement in their children’s day to day learning of Geography at Ordinary level with a greater number getting no assistance in homework (Figure 1). Adel (2002) found parental involvement in children’s education having a direct bearing on their children’s performance. Figure 1 summarizes the level of parental involvement in pupils’ learning of the Ordinary level Geography at Avila high school through homework assistance.

![Homework assistance from parents](image)

**Figure 1: Homework assistance from parents**

About twenty three percent(23%) of the pupils were getting help from their family members with most of them being assisted by their elder brothers and sisters who also passed the same stage (ordinary level). Seventy seven percent (77%) did not get any help from their family members. In another study, Furstenberg & Hughes (1995) found parental involvement in a child’s education increases the rate of academic success of the child. In this research, the major reason behind pupils’ failure to getting assistance on homework from immediate family members was lack of knowledge of Geography in the family members. Most of these pupils were bush boarders and the others could not get any help from their family members because they did not know the subject. Most of the family members dropped out of school before they reached form
four hence they could not offer any help. It was also observed that such pupils developed a negative attitude towards the subject, leading to them performing poorly in the subject as it demotivates the learners.

4.3 Subject preferences

Pupils were asked to list their favorite subjects in their order of priority from five options and they expressed their views on Geography (figure 2). Twenty five percent (25%) of total population showed that Geography was among their favorite subjects as they indicated it on their first and second choice. Forty percent (40%) indicated their interest in Geography on the third and fourth option. Fifteen percent (15%) highlighted their interest in the subject as the fifth option. Eighty five percent (85%) responded stating their preferences whilst fifteen percent (15%) did not respond to the question. The fifteen percent did not mention Geography in their choice instead other subjects were written on the lists.

![Subject preferences by pupils in form 4 at Avila Secondary School](image)

**Figure 2: Subject preferences by pupils in form 4 at Avila Secondary School**

Results suggest that most of the pupils did not like Geography as evidenced by their failure to express their interest in the subject. Lack of interest could be contributing to the poor performance in the subject. Pupils also highlighted that the teacher usually provides notes for them and they also do presentations. Field work and practical were rarely done. From the interviews it was found that the teaching styles often used by the teacher which are the lecture
method and presentations were not aligned to what pupils preferred in the teaching of the subject. Felder (1993) stated that an alignment between students learning preferences and an instructor’s teaching style leads to a better recall and understanding of concepts. The fact that there was no alignment in the pupils interests and teaching style could have possibly contributed in the failure of pupils.

4.4 Student Access to textbooks and sponsorship

Only three percent of the students got personal textbooks from their parents whilst the rest of the pupils relied on school textbooks which are not adequate by themselves. Though the school was furnished with textbooks through the education transition fund scheme (ratio 1:1), they also need to be supported by other textbooks by different authors. This is supported by Sugahara et al, (2008) who stated that learner’s backgrounds relating to the availability of educational resources such as books, computers, educational television channels, furniture, study environment and general home support are crucial to their academic success.

Most of the students were sponsored by their parents for their education and the least were donor sponsored (figure 3).

![Figure 3: Pupils sponsorship](image)

Donors sponsoring the pupils’ education include Camfed, Beam and Capernaum Trust which accounted for 13.3% whilst 20% were self sponsored. 20% of the self sponsored were all males.
Among those pupils that were sampled twenty percent got assistance in homework from their family members. Access to personal copy textbooks was either through books bought or inherited from relatives. In support of the results, Rouse and Barrow (2006) stated that the economically disadvantaged parents are less able to afford the cost of education of their children and consequently the students do not work at their fullest potential. The majority of the pupils in this study cannot buy themselves textbooks and most of the times; such pupils have to rely on the few books that are offered by the school.

4.5 Household sizes for pupils participating in the research

Results showed that the greater pool of the pupils came from large households and this reduced the ability of their parents and guardians to provide basic resources for them. Seventeen percent of students came from small households with a maximum of three children (Table 2). Thirty seven percent consisted of families with sizes varying from four to six members in each homestead. Thirty three percent of the total homesteads sampled consisted of members between seven and nine. The remaining thirteen percent had larger households with more than ten people. The performance of pupils in the test they were given can give a conclusion that larger households in this research had an influence on the performance of the pupils. Most pupils who indicated that their households were large, their marks were also low.

Table 2: Family sizes for students considered in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family size</th>
<th>Number of homesteads (%)</th>
<th>Average test score (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 and above</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
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In support of these results, Cook and Evans (2000) found that students from disadvantaged groups have poor academic performance and bigger households are taken as a proxy for disadvantage. The bigger the household size, the more strained the resources are. Majority of pupils from this study came from large households with limited access to resources and this negatively affected their academic achievement.

4.6 Student performance and Place of residence

On a daily basis 47% of the pupils came to school as day boarders whereas 53% came from home. About 17% of those who were bush boarding were girls and 27% of those who came from home were girls. Average test score for the day scholars was 45% and for the bush boarders it was 28%.

Figure 4: Distribution of students relative to place of residence

Fifty three percent (53%) of the pupils were day scholars who attended school coming from their homes whereas forty seven percent (47%) consisted of bush boarders who came from very faraway places that are not accessible on a daily basis. In a quest for education these pupils searched for accommodation in areas surrounding the school where they would stay during the term as they attend school. Attendance type also contributes to the nature of performance by pupils. From the research, bush boarding is contributing to the poor performance by pupils. This
is in agreement with the findings of Adel (2002) who stated that learners from unstable homes are emotionally disturbed and therefore the pupils would under perform in school. Bush boarders do not experience a complete home environment offering support in their academic work and this is supported by Haralambos and Holborn (2002) who said that the school should be an extension of home, whatever activities that take place in the school should be reinforced by support from home for it to be successful. In bush boarding pupils do not have any support from home as the pupils will be alone day in day out throughout the term.

4.7 Summary

This chapter focused on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data from the research instruments used. The data was presented in form of table, bar chart and pie chart. The results collected were discussed with reference to the literature reviewed. Interpretation of the results was made and possible causes of pupils performing poorly in ‘O’ level Geography were identified.
CHAPTER 5:  
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0: INTRODUCTION
The chapter presents a summary of the whole research on an investigation of factors influencing academic performance of form four Geography students at Avila High School, Nyanga Zimbabwe. Conclusions were drawn based on the findings and recommendations for improved teaching and learning of Geography at Ordinary level in Nyanga district.

5: 1 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS
The aim of the study was to assess factors that affect performance in ‘O’ level (form 4) Geography in the school and in the community. The study was carried out at Avila High school which is a day school of mixed sex. The study revealed that there are several factors both at home and at school contributing towards pupils’ poor performance in Geography at Form Four. The factors range from the home environment to the school environment. These factors include lack of resources, poor attendance by pupils, negative attitudes towards the subject by pupils inadequate study time, and teacher based factors.

5:2 CONCLUSIONS
The main research question was “What are the factors contributing to pupils’ poor performance in Ordinary level (form 4) Geography in Nyanga district?”
- It was discovered that most pupils were getting very little, if any, help at home in their school work which made the pupils develop a negative attitude towards the subject hence the poor performance.
- The majority of parents cannot afford to buy their children personal copies of Geography textbooks. Failure to access personal resources limits the amount of information available to such pupils. Larger households also limit the ability of the parents to provide the necessary resources to assist pupils in the learning process.
- Pupils attending school from nearby homes (bush boarding) are also disadvantaged by the lack of proper guidance as most of them stay in homes without elders who can guide them.
- Most pupils expressed lack of interest in the subject which was seen as one of the major factors affecting performance.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- The Avila communities should work towards providing library facilities which cater for all students. This can be achieved through seeking assistance from different stake-holders for assistance.
- Internet facilities should also be provided at the school to widen the resource base for different subjects.
- Parents must be encouraged to be proactive in their children’s learning. Parents play an active role. Despite their lack of knowledge in Geography, parents should try by all means to provide their children with an enabling environment.
- Teachers are encouraged to source materials other than the textbooks currently in use in most schools. Teachers should source up to date materials which are in line with the requirements of the Ordinary level Geography syllabus.
- Teachers are encouraged to continually seek to improve themselves professionally so that they keep abreast the changes that are taking place in the field of Geography.
REFERENCES


**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

The interview schedule was prepared for the pupils to give their responses to why they perform poorly in geography. Before starting the researcher asked the interviewees to allow her to take notes during interviews.

**Interview questions**

(a) Do you like doing geography?

(b) Do you find geography lessons interesting? Why?

(c) Does the school have Geography text books?

(d) How often do you get homework?

(e) Who assists you in doing your homework?

(f) Do you have personal copy geography textbooks?

(g) Do your parents encourage you to do geography?
The researcher is a Post Graduate Diploma in Education student at Bindura University. This Research is being carried out in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Programme as well as identifying the causes of pupils’ poor performance in Geography at Ordinary level and finding possible solutions to such causes so as to try to improve the teaching and learning of Geography at Ordinary level in Nyanga. You are therefore requested to answer the following questions honestly and truthfully.

Respondent number

Please answer all questions by ticking an appropriate response or by writing your answer in the space provided.

1. In which class are you in?

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2. What is your gender?

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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>female</td>
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3. What was your age at your last birthday?


4. How many people stay with you in your household?


5. What is your favorite subject? List them in order of priority.


6. What are the factors that hinder your performance within the school and in the community?

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<td>Textbooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of library resources</td>
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</table>
Environment
Parents low economic status
Parental education level
Religion
Poor attendance
Lack of proper guidance
others

7. Type of attendance

Day scholar
Bush boarder

8. Who pays your school fees?

Donor funded
Parents
Self sponsored
Any other guardian

9. How do you rank teaching of the subject in the school?

Poor
Average
Good
Very good

10. Please rate teachers’ efforts in improving your performance

No effort at all
Very little effort
Some effort
Considerable effort

11. How many geography lessons do you do per week?


12. Do you get help in Geography from your family members?


13. Do you have personal copies of geography textbooks?
14. What do you think can be done to improve performance in geography?


15. What mark did you get in the last test that you wrote in Geography?

End of questionnaire.

Thank you for your time.