

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**TREND ANALYSIS OF BASIC EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
(BECE) RESULTS IN SOCIAL STUDIES: A CASE STUDY OF AFRANCHO
METHODIST JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**



**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION.**

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**Dissertation submitted to the Department of Social Sciences,
University of Education Winneba,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of a Master of Education in Social Studies.**

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Name:

Candidate's Signature:

Date:

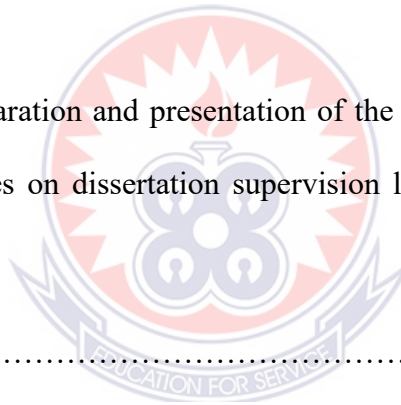
Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on dissertation supervision laid down by the University of Education Winneba.

Supervisor's Name:

Supervisor's Signature:

Date:



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I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Almighty God for His gracious love, care, protection, and direction throughout my entire education. My appreciation goes to Dr. Simon Kyei, my supervisor, for his expert supervision, dedicated efforts, and his valuable objective criticisms throughout this work.



DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BECE	-	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CRDD	-	Curriculum Research and Development Division
ESP	-	Education Strategic Planning
GES	-	Ghana Education Service
JHS	-	Junior High School
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
PTA(s)	-	Parent-Teacher Association(s)
TLMs	-	Teaching and Learning Materials
WAEC	-	West African Examinations Council



ABSTRACT

This study examined the trends in Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) Social Studies results at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School from 2020 to 2024, focusing on performance patterns, influencing factors, and strategies for improvement. A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was employed, using document analysis of BECE results and semi-structured interviews with three (3) Social Studies teachers and the headteacher. Quantitative findings revealed fluctuating performance trends, with above-average results in 2020 and 2021, a decline in 2022 and 2023, and significant improvement in 2024, when the school achieved its highest pass rate of 87.3% and an excellent average grade of 4.6. Gender analysis showed that female students generally outperformed males, though the gap narrowed over time. Qualitative findings indicated that teacher-related factors such as pedagogical approaches, workload, and professional development, school-level factors including resources and supervision, student attitudes and study habits, and external influences like parental involvement, curriculum design, and examination pressure collectively influenced students' performance. Strategies proposed included increasing instructional time, diversifying teaching methods, improving resource provision, strengthening leadership, and enhancing parental engagement. The study concludes that improving Social Studies performance requires a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach integrating teacher, school, student, and external support systems.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Education serves as a fundamental tool for national development, equipping individuals with knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for effective participation in societal transformation. In Ghana, the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) represents a crucial assessment tool that determines students' readiness for progression into the senior high school level. Among the subjects examined, Social Studies holds a unique place due to its integrative approach to teaching civic, history, geography, and contemporary societal issues. Social Studies is aimed at preparing learners to become responsible citizens, critical thinkers, and active participants in the democratic process (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010). However, performance trends in the subject at the BECE level have been inconsistent across different schools and regions, raising concerns about the quality of instruction, resource availability, and student engagement.

Afrancho Methodist Junior High School, located in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, presents an interesting case for examining such trends. Anecdotal evidence and preliminary school records suggest fluctuating performance in Social Studies in recent BECE years. Understanding these trends is essential, not just for improving individual student outcomes but also for informing policy and classroom practices at both school and district levels. Over the years, national education stakeholders have emphasised the importance of quality education at the basic level, as outlined in Ghana's Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2018-2030. The plan underscores the need for data-driven interventions to enhance learning outcomes and equity (MoE, 2018). Yet, despite several reforms and teacher capacity-building initiatives, disparities in performance

persist, especially in Social Studies, which is often undervalued in comparison to core subjects like Mathematics and English.

Previous studies by Nkrumah (2018) and Ankomah et al. (2005) attributed performance fluctuations to a range of factors including teacher qualification, pedagogical methods, student attitudes, curriculum content, and parental support. Additionally, poor performance in Social Studies stem from a lack of teaching aids, ineffective supervision, and minimal emphasis placed on the subject during school hours (Ashun, 2022). As such, analysing performance trends over a specified period can provide insight into underlying causes and enable more targeted interventions.

By focusing on Afrancho Methodist JHS, this study aims to fill a local research gap while contributing to the broader discourse on educational performance in Ghana. It provides empirical data on year-to-year performance in Social Studies at BECE and explore possible causes of fluctuations. The ultimate goal is to generate practical recommendations that can assist teachers, headteachers, and policymakers in improving outcomes not only at Afrancho Methodist JHS but in similar rural and peri-urban educational contexts across the country.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

BECE serves as a critical gateway for students in Ghana transitioning from the junior high school (JHS) level to senior high school (SHS). Performance in this examination significantly influences students' academic and career trajectories. Among the examinable subjects, Social Studies plays a unique and vital role in shaping students' understanding of citizenship, governance, cultural values, and socio-economic development (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010). Despite its importance, there have been persistent concerns about students' performance in Social Studies, especially at the JHS level. Over the years, data from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and individual schools indicate inconsistent and, in many

cases, declining performance trends in the subject (WAEC, 2021). These trends raise questions about the effectiveness of instructional strategies, availability of teaching and learning resources, student attitudes, and the overall prioritisation of Social Studies within the basic school curriculum.

In the case of Afrancho Methodist Junior High School, located in the Offinso North District of the Ashanti Region, preliminary observation of academic records from 2015 to 2023 reveals a fluctuating pattern in students' BECE results in Social Studies. Some years record above-average performance, while others experience significant declines, despite the school's participation in similar teaching and administrative structures. This inconsistency is alarming and suggests that underlying factors may be influencing these results. It also highlights a potential gap in understanding the dynamics that affect students' performance in the subject within the local context. While considerable attention is often given to performance in Mathematics, English Language, and Integrated Science due to their direct implications for SHS placement, Social Studies tends to be neglected in both academic intervention strategies and performance analysis frameworks (Ankomah et al., 2005).

Furthermore, Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Ministry of Education (MoE) have continually emphasised the use of evidence-based approaches in monitoring and improving educational outcomes (MoE, 2018). However, there is a paucity of empirical studies that focus on trend analysis of BECE results in Social Studies, particularly at the school level. Most existing studies take a national or regional outlook, often overlooking micro-level performance indicators that are critical for context-specific interventions (Nkrumah, 2018). This lack of localised research has made it difficult for school heads, teachers, and district education officers to implement data-driven strategies that could enhance teaching and learning in Social Studies.

The problem, therefore, is that while BECE performance in Social Studies remains inconsistent at Afrancho Methodist JHS, there is insufficient analysis and understanding of the trends and factors contributing to these patterns. Without such insight, efforts to improve performance may remain speculative and ineffective. This study thus sought to fill this knowledge gap by conducting a detailed trend analysis of BECE Social Studies results at Afrancho Methodist JHS over a specified period, identifying patterns, possible causes of performance fluctuations, and recommending strategies for improvement.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine and analyse the trends in students' performance in Social Studies in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School over a defined period.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study objectives are to:

1. examine the trends in BECE Social Studies results at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School from 2020 to 2024.
2. identify the key factors contributing to the fluctuations in students' performance in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS.
3. explore strategies for improving students' performance in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the trends in BECE Social Studies results at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School from 2020 to 2024?
2. What factors contribute to the fluctuations in students' performance in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS?

3. What strategies can be adopted to improve students' performance in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons, particularly in the context of educational planning, classroom practice, and policy formulation. First, it offers valuable insights into the performance patterns of students in Social Studies at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) level, with specific focus on Afrancho Methodist Junior High School. Understanding these trends can help headteachers and teachers to make informed decisions regarding curriculum delivery, teacher deployment, instructional methods, and resource allocation. Stakeholders can pinpoint what interventions have worked in the past and what challenges continue to hinder progress by identifying periods of consistent improvement or decline.

Second, the study serves as a data-driven tool for enhancing pedagogical practices. For Social Studies teachers, the findings can provide a clearer picture of how students have performed over time, thereby enabling the design of targeted teaching strategies and remedial programs that align with students' learning needs. It can also encourage reflective practice among teachers, prompting them to assess the effectiveness of their instructional methods and explore innovative ways to engage students in the subject. This is particularly important as Social Studies often deals with abstract and context-based topics that require critical thinking, analysis, and practical application, i.e., skills that can only be developed through intentional and well-planned teaching approaches.

Third, the study contributes to broader educational quality improvement efforts within the Ghanaian basic education system. District education officers and policymakers may find the results useful in evaluating how individual schools like Afrancho Methodist JHS are

performing in specific subjects, beyond the usual focus on English, Mathematics, and Science. Such localised assessments can help in designing context-specific policies and interventions aimed at improving student learning outcomes in all core subjects, including Social Studies. Furthermore, it supports ongoing national and district-level efforts to promote equitable and inclusive education by highlighting gaps that may exist due to location, resource availability, or teacher capacity.

Additionally, the study will benefit students and parents by shedding light on the factors influencing academic performance in Social Studies. When parents and guardians are made aware of performance trends and their causes, they can become more actively involved in supporting their children's learning. Students, on the other hand, can gain a better understanding of their own performance and what they need to improve upon to succeed in the subject.

Finally, the research adds to the limited body of literature on trend analysis in Social Studies performance at the basic school level in Ghana. While numerous studies have focused on national performance statistics or emphasised other core subjects, this study provides a much-needed case-specific analysis that can serve as a reference for future research. It lays the groundwork for further academic inquiry into how performance trends can be used to predict outcomes, inform educational planning, and ultimately enhance the quality of basic education in Ghana.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study is delimited to the analysis of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results in the subject of Social Studies, focusing exclusively on Afrancho Methodist Junior High School in the Offinso North Assembly of the Ashanti Region, Ghana. The research concentrates on student performance trends over a five-year period, specifically from 2020 to

2024. In terms of geographical and institutional coverage, the study is limited to Afrancho Methodist Junior High School and does not attempt to make direct comparisons with other schools within the municipality or region.

The study is also delimited in terms of participants and data sources. It primarily relies on secondary data in the form of BECE results provided by the school's academic records and supplemented by interviews and questionnaires from a limited number of teachers and headteachers for clarification purposes.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

While this study aims to provide valuable insights into the trends of BECE results in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School, several limitations may affect the scope and interpretation of its findings. One major limitation is the reliance on secondary data, specifically the BECE results obtained from the school's academic records. The accuracy and completeness of this data are subject to the quality of record-keeping by the school over the study period. Any inconsistencies, missing data, or undocumented changes in assessment or grading practices may influence the reliability of the trend analysis. Additionally, the study focuses solely on one subject, Social Studies, without examining how inter-subject dynamics or student workload in other subjects might indirectly impact performance in Social Studies.

Another limitation is the narrow geographical scope of the research. By focusing exclusively on Afrancho Methodist JHS, the findings may not be generalisable to other schools within the Offinso North District or across the broader Ashanti Region. The contextual factors affecting this particular school such as teacher qualifications, availability of teaching resources, student population, and leadership practices may differ significantly from those in other schools, thus limiting the broader applicability of the results.

The study also faces potential limitations related to participant responses from interviews or questionnaires employed to complement the data. Teachers and administrators may offer biased or guarded responses due to fear of judgment or administrative repercussions, which can affect the depth and honesty of qualitative data. Time constraints and limited access to certain stakeholders or archival documents may further restrict the scope of the investigation.

Lastly, external factors such as changes in national curriculum standards, educational policies, or unforeseen disruptions such as pandemics or school closures during the period under review may influence students' performance but are beyond the control of the researcher. These variables, although acknowledged, may not be fully explored due to the specific focus and methodological limitations of the study. Despite these constraints, the study remains valuable in offering localised insights into performance trends and their implications for improving Social Studies education.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Trend Analysis: In the context of this study, trend analysis refers to the systematic examination of changes or patterns in students' performance in Social Studies in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) over a five-year period. It involves identifying whether results are improving, declining, or remaining stable across the years under review.

Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE): BECE is a standardised national examination conducted annually in Ghana by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) for final-year junior high school students. It serves as the primary criterion for placement into senior high schools and other second-cycle institutions.

Social Studies: This is an integrated academic subject taught at the basic education level in Ghana that combines elements of history, geography, economics, civics, and contemporary social issues. It aims to develop responsible, informed, and active citizens.

Performance: In this study, performance refers to the academic achievement of students as measured by their scores or grades in Social Studies in the BECE. It indicates how well students understand and can apply knowledge and skills acquired in the subject.

Junior High School (JHS): JHS refers to the second level of Ghana's basic education system, typically consisting of three years (JHS 1 to JHS 3), and is the stage immediately preceding the BECE. Afrancho Methodist JHS is the specific school under investigation in this study.

1.10 Organisation of the Study

This study is organised into five (5) chapters. Chapter One presents the introduction, entailing an overview of the research, including the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance, delimitations, limitations, and definition of key terms. Chapter Two focuses on the review of relevant literature, covering theoretical and empirical perspectives on academic performance trends, factors influencing BECE results, and related case studies. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, detailing the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection instruments, procedures, and data analysis methods. Chapter Four presents and analyses the data collected, highlighting the performance trends in Social Studies and the factors contributing to them. Finally, Chapter Five summarises the key findings, draws conclusions, and offers recommendations for stakeholders aimed at improving Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of existing literature relevant to the trend analysis of BECE results in Social Studies, with a focus on both theoretical and empirical perspectives. It explores key concepts such as academic performance, assessment practices, and subject-specific challenges associated with Social Studies at the basic education level. The chapter also examines national and regional performance trends in BECE over the years, including factors that influence student outcomes such as teaching methods, school resources, learner attitudes, and policy interventions. Furthermore, the review highlights gaps in current research, particularly the limited focus on localised studies like Afrancho Methodist Junior High School. By synthesising previous studies and theoretical frameworks, this chapter provides a foundation for understanding the context and significance of the current research, while guiding the methodological approach and analysis in subsequent chapters.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theories guiding this study are the Systems Theory of Education and the Bloom's Mastery Learning Theory.

2.1.1 The Systems Theory of Education

The Systems Theory of Education, originally rooted in general systems theory proposed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1950s. Applied to education, Systems Theory views schools as dynamic, interrelated systems in which various components such as students, teachers, administrators, curriculum, infrastructure, and external influences interact to produce

educational outcomes. According to this theory, a change or dysfunction in one part of the system inevitably affects the performance of the entire educational institution (Nguyen, 2024).

Systems Theory is particularly appropriate for this study because it supports a holistic examination of school performance, emphasising that academic outcomes like BECE results do not occur in isolation. Instead, they are the result of continuous input-process-output cycles. The “inputs” may include student demographics, teacher qualifications, and learning materials; the “processes” refer to classroom teaching, school management, and assessment practices; while the “outputs” are the measurable academic results, such as BECE scores in Social Studies. When any of these components are weak or misaligned, the system’s ability to produce favourable academic outcomes is compromised (Shaked et al., 2017).

Moreover, Systems Theory encourages the analysis of feedback mechanisms. In an educational context, performance data such as BECE results serve as feedback, which should inform future decisions and policy adjustments. If performance in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS has been declining, Systems Theory suggests examining the causes within the entire educational structure of the school, rather than attributing blame solely to students or teachers. This approach promotes accountability across all levels of the educational process and provides a framework for sustainable improvement based on continuous assessment and response to feedback.

The application of Systems Theory also aligns well with Ghana’s education sector reforms that emphasise quality, accountability, and performance monitoring. Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Ministry of Education have adopted various data-driven interventions to address learning outcomes, many of which are predicated on the idea of improving the interconnected components of the school system (MoE, 2021). Using this theoretical lens, the current study

contributes to understanding how school-level practices and broader systemic factors intersect to influence Social Studies outcomes in BECE.

Thus, the Systems Theory of Education provides a comprehensive framework for examining the trends in BECE results at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School. It emphasises the interconnectedness of various educational elements and supports a multi-dimensional analysis of student performance. Through this theory, the study seeks not only to identify trends but also to uncover systemic issues and propose informed, holistic strategies for improving Social Studies achievement.

2.1.2 The Bloom's Mastery Learning Theory

Another suitable theory underpinning the study is Bloom's Mastery Learning Theory, developed by educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom in the 1960s. This theory emphasises the belief that all students can learn effectively given enough time and appropriate learning conditions. Mastery learning rejects the traditional bell curve model of student achievement, instead proposing that instructional strategies, time, and feedback should be adapted to enable every student to reach a high level of understanding (Bloom, 1968). In the context of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), where uniform assessments are used to evaluate students across Ghana, Bloom's model is highly relevant. It advocates for differentiated instructional approaches, timely intervention for struggling students, and frequent formative assessments to ensure mastery before progression. Social Studies, being a conceptually rich subject, aligns well with this approach, as students often require multiple opportunities to internalise content that connects past and present social realities with civic responsibilities.

Within Afrancho Methodist Junior High School, where the trend analysis of BECE results is being undertaken, Bloom's theory provides a useful lens for examining both teaching practices and student learning outcomes. If a mastery learning approach is inconsistently applied such as

when some students are moved forward in the syllabus without having fully understood previous content, this may lead to declining or erratic performance trends over the years. Conversely, when mastery learning principles are implemented through practices like remediation, extended instructional time, and diagnostic assessment, student outcomes in Social Studies are likely to improve. Studies have shown that mastery learning significantly boosts student achievement, particularly in subjects that require critical thinking and comprehension, such as Social Studies (Guskey, 2007; Guskey, 2010). The theory also promotes equity by ensuring that every student is supported until they demonstrate proficiency, a key concern in standardised testing contexts like the BECE. Moreover, Bloom's framework supports the study's second objective, which explores factors influencing performance, by drawing attention to pedagogical methods, teacher expectations, and resource availability as critical determinants of learning success.

Bloom's Mastery Learning Theory is particularly applicable to this study because it provides both a theoretical rationale for why student performance may vary and a practical model for how to improve it. It shifts the focus from student limitations to instructional design and system responsiveness, making it a robust foundation for evaluating trends and proposing improvements in BECE Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS.

2.2 Conceptual Review

This section reviews key concepts and scholarly insights on Basic Education and the BECE in Ghana, the role of Social Studies in the basic school curriculum, methods of assessment and evaluation in the subject, previous studies analysing BECE performance trends, and the various factors that influence students' achievement in Social Studies.

2.2.1 The Concepts of Basic Education and BECE in Ghana

Basic education in Ghana comprises kindergarten, primary, and junior high school (JHS) levels and serves as the foundation for lifelong learning and human capital development. It is designed to provide learners with the essential knowledge, skills, and values needed for personal and national development. The Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) is administered at the end of JHS by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and is the principal means for assessing students' academic achievement and determining placement into senior high schools and technical/vocational institutions (MoE, 2018). BECE evaluates candidates in core and elective subjects, with Social Studies being a key component due to its role in promoting civic responsibility, cultural awareness, and national identity. As such, BECE results serve as a crucial indicator of the effectiveness of Ghana's basic education system and provide insights into both student performance and the quality of instruction received (WAEC, 2020).

2.2.3 The Role of Social Studies in Basic Education

Social Studies plays a pivotal role in Ghana's basic education curriculum by equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for responsible citizenship, national cohesion, and sustainable development. It is an integrated subject that combines elements of history, geography, economics, civics, and contemporary social issues to help students understand their social environment and function effectively within it (MoE, 2018). At the basic level, Social Studies fosters critical thinking, civic competence, and a strong sense of identity and belonging, which are essential for the holistic development of young learners. The subject also promotes values such as patriotism, respect for diversity, and environmental consciousness. These are principles that are vital in shaping students into active and informed citizens (CRDD, 2010). Moreover, Social Studies supports the attainment of national goals such as peacebuilding, democracy, and good governance, making it a strategic tool for societal

transformation. Its inclusion in BECE reflects its importance, as students' performance in the subject can influence their placement and academic progression (WAEC, 2020).

2.2.4 Assessment and Evaluation in Social Studies

Assessment and evaluation are integral components of Social Studies instruction at the basic education level in Ghana, serving as essential tools for measuring student learning, guiding instructional decisions, and ensuring educational accountability. In Social Studies, assessment encompasses both formative and summative approaches. Formative assessments, such as class exercises, group discussions, and quizzes, are conducted during the learning process to monitor student understanding and provide immediate feedback for improvement. Summative assessments, on the other hand, include end-of-term exams and the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), which evaluate students' cumulative knowledge and skills acquisition (GES, 2010).

Effective assessment in Social Studies must capture not only cognitive outcomes, such as knowledge of historical events or geographic concepts, but also affective and psychomotor domains, including attitudes, values, and practical citizenship skills (CRDD, 2010). However, research has shown that assessments in Ghana often emphasise rote memorisation over critical thinking and problem-solving, which undermines the broader objectives of the Social Studies curriculum (Baidoo-Anu & DeLuca, 2023). BECE, in particular, has been criticised for its over-reliance on multiple-choice questions, which may not adequately reflect students' analytical and interpretive abilities.

To improve assessment practices in Social Studies, the Ghana Education Service encourages the use of varied and learner-centered evaluation strategies that align with curriculum goals and real-world applications. Continuous assessment, teacher observation, project work, and portfolios are recommended to supplement standardised testing (MoE, 2018). These diversified

methods promote a more holistic evaluation of student performance and better prepare learners for civic life and further education.

2.2.5 Factors Influencing Students' Performance in Social Studies

Student performance in Social Studies at the BECE level is influenced by a combination of school-related, teacher-related, student-centered, and socio-environmental factors. Each of these dimensions plays a critical role in shaping how students understand, engage with, and apply the knowledge and skills outlined in the Social Studies curriculum.

One of the most widely cited factors is the quality of teaching. The effectiveness of a Social Studies teacher in terms of pedagogical skills, subject mastery, and ability to integrate real-life scenarios into lessons has a significant impact on students' academic outcomes (Baidoo-Anu & DeLuca, 2023). Teachers who rely heavily on rote memorization rather than interactive and participatory teaching methods may limit students' ability to apply concepts critically and analytically, which are key components of Social Studies. Inadequate teacher preparation and professional development also contribute to poor instructional delivery, especially in schools where Social Studies is handled by non-specialist teachers (Adams, 2022).

Availability and use of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) is another critical factor. The subject requires maps, charts, historical documents, civic texts, and audio-visual materials to create a practical and engaging learning experience. However, many basic schools in Ghana, particularly in rural settings, face acute shortages of such resources, limiting students' ability to grasp abstract concepts or explore diverse perspectives (Asante et al., 2024). A lack of materials not only hinders teaching effectiveness but also negatively affects student motivation and participation.

Student attitudes and motivation also play a crucial role in performance. Students who perceive Social Studies as less important compared to mathematics or science subjects may not invest adequate time and effort in mastering the content. Olutola (2017) notes that interest in the subject is often shaped by societal perceptions and the attitudes of teachers, parents, and peers. Additionally, students' self-discipline, study habits, and ability to manage time effectively all contribute to their performance.

Parental involvement and home environment are equally significant. Supportive home settings that prioritise education, provide access to reading materials, and create space for homework and revision are known to enhance students' academic performance. Conversely, homes marked by poverty, overcrowding, or neglect may limit learners' focus and readiness for academic success (Eric & Tobias, 2020).

Furthermore, school management and leadership influence BECE outcomes. Effective school leadership ensures that teaching standards are upheld, teachers are regularly monitored and supported, and resources are allocated efficiently. Schools with committed headteachers, functional parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and collaborative staff often perform better in BECE, including in Social Studies (Abaka, 2019).

Lastly, assessment practices significantly affect how students prepare and perform. BECE, which uses a largely summative approach through structured and objective questions, often emphasises recall over analysis. This can misalign with the curriculum's objectives, which emphasise critical thinking, problem-solving, and civic responsibility (CRDD, 2010). Schools that incorporate diverse forms of continuous assessment such as project work, debates, and presentations tend to better equip students for holistic understanding and examination success.

To sum up, students' performance in Social Studies at the BECE level is shaped by a complex interaction of instructional quality, resource availability, learner attitudes, family background, and school leadership.

2.3 Empirical Review

Several studies have examined the performance trends of students in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in Ghana, with particular emphasis on the factors influencing achievement and the implications for educational policy and classroom practice. These studies provide a critical foundation for understanding how internal and external variables interact to shape academic outcomes in Social Studies.

Asante et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive trend analysis of BECE results in the Ashanti Region and observed significant fluctuations in students' performance over a five-year period. Their findings revealed that while some schools experienced steady improvement, others showed decline or irregular patterns due to disparities in teacher qualifications, school management practices, and resource availability. The study used longitudinal statistical analysis to track performance and is particularly relevant to the present research because of its regional proximity to Afrancho Methodist JHS. However, it focused mainly on aggregate school-level performance and did not delve into specific subject-level details such as Social Studies, nor did it include qualitative perspectives from stakeholders, limiting its explanatory depth.

Similarly, Baidoo-Anu and DeLuca (2023) critically examined BECE results across selected schools in the Greater Accra Region and identified that while enrolment in Social Studies remained high, performance was relatively poor compared to other core subjects. They argued that insufficient instructional time, lack of teacher specialisation, and inadequate assessment practices were major contributors to underperformance. Their work, though theoretically rich

and offering a macro-level critique of standardized testing in Ghana, relied more on conceptual analysis than empirical school-level data. This limits its direct applicability to localized case studies like Afrancho Methodist JHS.

Teacher-related variables are a recurring theme in empirical studies. Adams (2022) demonstrated that teacher qualification and subject mastery strongly predict student success in Social Studies. Schools with underqualified teachers performed significantly worse, especially in analytical and interpretive sections of the subject. While this study established a statistical correlation between teacher quality and performance, it did not account for external variables such as infrastructure or socio-economic status. Similarly, Abaka (2019) analysed national BECE data and argued that curriculum overload, rote learning, and the summative focus of BECE assessments hinder students' ability to think critically and apply Social Studies concepts effectively.

The influence of leadership and institutional culture has also been emphasised. Eric and Tobias (2020) found that schools with strong leadership, effective supervision, and teacher motivation strategies achieved better and more consistent BECE outcomes. Their mixed-methods study, which combined interviews with performance data, highlighted leadership as a critical but often overlooked determinant of success. However, its small, geographically limited sample reduces generalisability and did not explore instructional leadership specifically in Social Studies.

Stakeholder perceptions provide additional explanatory depth. Olutola (2017) investigated gender and school location as predictors of BECE performance and reported that urban schools typically outperformed rural ones due to better infrastructure, qualified teachers, and supportive learning environments. In Social Studies, disparities were more evident in topics requiring critical thinking and real-world application. This study also highlighted stakeholder perspectives, noting that teachers often attribute poor performance to student motivation and

the devaluation of Social Studies relative to science and mathematics. Similarly, Baidoo (2021) gathered qualitative insights from administrators and teachers, showing that high-stakes external examinations tend to encourage “teaching to the test” and hinder deeper conceptual learning. While these studies contribute valuable qualitative data, their reliance on perception rather than empirical trend analysis reduces their direct utility for performance-based case studies.

Beyond Ghana, international and African-based research provides comparative perspectives. Uwezo (2014), through citizen-led assessments in East Africa, emphasised the importance of foundational literacy and home learning environments for Social Studies comprehension, although the study was not examination-based. Mullis et al. (2020), through the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), underscored the role of curriculum alignment, teaching practices, and socio-economic context in shaping examination performance. While TIMSS does not directly cover Social Studies and largely reflects developed-country contexts, its findings highlight systemic reforms and teacher support as essential drivers of performance.

Taken together, both local and international empirical studies converge on several factors influencing BECE performance: teacher qualification, availability of teaching and learning resources, curriculum design, leadership effectiveness, and socio-economic context. However, most Ghanaian studies focus on district or regional aggregates, with limited attention to subject-specific and school-level analysis. This leaves a notable gap in localised, mixed-methods research that combines trend analysis with stakeholder insights. The present study, which focuses on Afrancho Methodist Junior High School, seeks to fill this gap by offering a contextualised understanding of Social Studies performance trends and the school-level dynamics that shape them.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study is structured around three core research objectives: (1) to analyse the trend of BECE results in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School from 2015 to 2023; (2) to identify key factors influencing students' performance in Social Studies in the BECE; and (3) to assess the strategies adopted by teachers and headteachers to improve performance in the subject. These objectives are rooted in the performance-based education paradigm and are supported by theories such as the Systems Theory of Education and Bloom's Mastery Learning Theory, both of which emphasise the interaction between inputs (teachers, students, resources), processes (teaching and assessment), and outputs (student performance).

The first component of the conceptual framework focuses on identifying and explaining performance patterns over time. Trend analysis involves tracking annual BECE performance data in Social Studies, which allows researchers to observe changes, fluctuations, and possible improvements or declines. According to Asante et al. (2024), longitudinal data analysis is crucial for uncovering persistent performance gaps and evaluating the effectiveness of policy and curriculum reforms. The framework adopts a quantitative approach to explore these trends, using descriptive statistics such as mean scores, pass rates, and grade distributions. The use of trend analysis is supported by educational evaluation theory, which emphasises using data to inform instruction and systemic improvement (Stiggins, 2005). This component assumes that shifts in performance may signal broader structural issues or the impact of interventions.

The second component of the conceptual framework identifies variables that contribute to student outcomes. Literature reviewed across Ghana and Africa suggests that performance in Social Studies is influenced by both internal and external factors, including teacher qualification, instructional methods, parental involvement, socio-economic status, and access

to teaching and learning materials (Adams, 2022; Kafyulilo, Rugambuka, & Moses, 2012). The Systems Theory of Education, as proposed by van Bertalanffy (2008), provides the theoretical underpinning here by viewing the school as a system in which inputs such as student background, teacher quality, and resource availability interact with processes like curriculum delivery to produce outputs (academic achievement). This objective aligns with conceptual models of student achievement that stress the importance of a conducive learning environment and stakeholder engagement (Fullan, 2016). Thus, the framework operationalises performance influencers as measurable variables for analysis, such as class size, frequency of formative assessment, and teacher professional development.

The final component of the framework focuses on the strategies employed by teachers and headteachers to enhance student performance. Drawing from the literature, successful strategies include the use of formative assessments, differentiated instruction, teacher collaboration, and targeted interventions for low-performing students (Baidoo, 2021; Baidoo-Anu & DeLuca, 2014). This objective is informed by Bloom's Mastery Learning Theory (Bloom, 1968), which posits that all students can learn effectively when provided with appropriate time, instructional support, and feedback. The framework also incorporates reflective practices and continuous professional development as mechanisms for sustaining instructional improvement. Through this lens, the study explores how Afrancho Methodist JHS implements these strategies, evaluates their effectiveness, and aligns them with performance goals in Social Studies.

This conceptual framework integrates theoretical and empirical insights to analyse BECE performance in Social Studies. It links performance trends with influencing factors and improvement strategies, thereby providing a multidimensional lens for understanding the dynamics at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School. Each component of the framework is

aligned with a research objective and grounded in established educational theory, enabling a robust analysis that can inform future policy and school-level interventions.

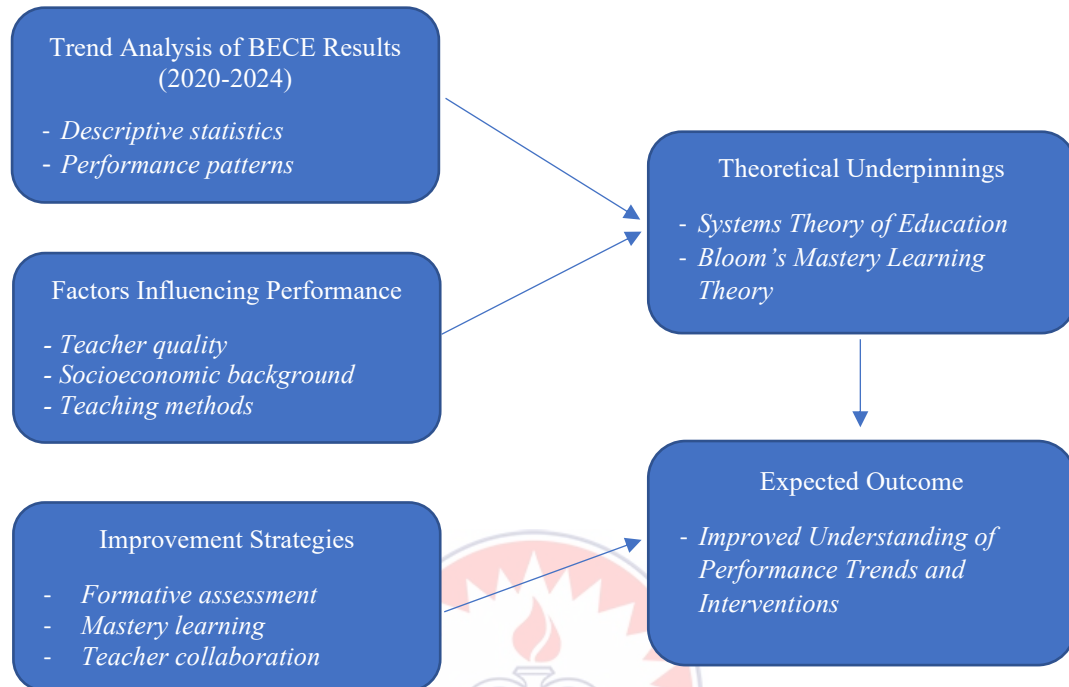


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework diagram visually presents the structure and relationships among the key components of the study on the trend analysis of BECE results in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS. It is organised around three (3) main research objectives, which are positioned on the left side of the diagram. These objectives represent the foundational pillars of the study: analysing performance trends over time, identifying influencing factors, and assessing strategies for improvement. Each box under these objectives summarises the scope and focus of the respective aim. For instance, the first objective emphasises trend analysis through the use of descriptive statistics and observation of performance patterns, reflecting the analytical foundation of the research.

In the centre-right section of the diagram lies the theoretical core of the framework, encapsulated in a box labelled “Theoretical Underpinnings.” This component highlights the dual theoretical basis of the study: the Systems Theory of Education and Bloom’s Mastery Learning Theory. The Systems Theory supports the study by explaining how various inputs (e.g., teaching quality, resources) interact within the school system to influence outcomes, while Bloom’s theory emphasises the importance of instructional strategies in helping all learners achieve mastery. Arrows link the research objectives to this theoretical base, indicating that each component of the investigation is informed by these educational theories.

The final element on the right side of the diagram is the “Expected Outcome” box. This part captures the ultimate goal of the study, i.e., to gain a comprehensive understanding of BECE performance trends and the interventions used to improve results in Social Studies. It is directly connected to both the theoretical framework and the third research objective, indicating that the insights derived from analysing existing strategies and theoretical models will collectively inform a more effective approach to improving academic outcomes.

Overall, the diagram serves as a roadmap, illustrating how the different parts of the research; objectives, theoretical grounding, and outcomes interrelate. It emphasises a systematic, theory-driven approach to understanding and addressing performance in Social Studies, making the study both analytically rigorous and practically relevant.

2.5 Summary

The literature reviewed in this study provided a comprehensive foundation for understanding the various dimensions influencing BECE performance trends in Social Studies. It began by examining the structure and purpose of basic education and the role of the BECE in Ghana’s educational system. The BECE serves as a critical assessment tool for measuring academic progress at the end of junior high school and serves as the basis for selection into senior high

schools. Social Studies, as a core subject within the curriculum, plays a vital role in shaping civic consciousness, national identity, and problem-solving skills among students. This contextual overview was essential in establishing the importance of analysing Social Studies performance trends, particularly within specific schools like Afrancho Methodist JHS.

The conceptual review further explored key areas such as assessment and evaluation practices in Social Studies, previous studies on BECE performance trends, and factors that influence academic outcomes. Prior research has shown fluctuations in student performance across different regions and time periods, often linked to teacher quality, availability of teaching and learning materials, socio-economic status, and students' learning attitudes. Formative and summative assessment strategies, curriculum alignment, and feedback mechanisms were also discussed as critical components influencing performance. The integration of Bloom's Mastery Learning Theory and the Systems Theory of Education provided theoretical backing to understand how learning environments, instructional approaches, and feedback systems interact to produce observed academic results. These theories emphasise the need for equitable instructional time and remediation strategies to ensure mastery of subject content before progression.

Finally, the empirical literature revealed that while several studies have been conducted in Ghana and other parts of Africa on BECE and similar standardised exams, there is still limited research at the micro-level such as school-specific analysis. Most studies focus on national trends or regional summaries without delving into individual school contexts, where unique socio-economic, pedagogical, and resource-based challenges exist. The review thus identified a significant gap that this study seeks to fill by focusing on Afrancho Methodist JHS.

The literature, thus established a strong case for a trend analysis study that not only tracks academic performance in Social Studies but also investigates the pedagogical and systemic conditions influencing those outcomes, thereby providing a clearer path for targeted interventions and policy recommendations.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to investigate the trend analysis of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School. It presents a detailed description of the research design, population and sample, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, procedures for data collection, and methods of data analysis. The chapter also addresses issues of validity and reliability of the instruments used, as well as ethical considerations observed throughout the study. The methodology provides a systematic framework for answering the research questions and achieving the study's objectives, ensuring that the findings are credible, replicable, and grounded in sound empirical procedures.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy that underpins this study is pragmatism, which emphasises practical approaches to investigating real-world problems by integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. Pragmatism is particularly suitable for studies like trend analysis, where the focus is on understanding both measurable outcomes and the contextual factors influencing them. In the context of this study, pragmatic philosophy allows for the examination of BECE performance trends in Social Studies using statistical data while also exploring underlying causes and implications through qualitative insights from teachers and the headteacher. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), the pragmatic worldview supports the use of multiple methods, different assumptions, and various forms of data collection and analysis to best address research questions. This approach aligns with the current study's aim of not only

describing performance patterns over time but also identifying contributing factors and potential strategies for improvement.

Moreover, the pragmatic paradigm avoids the dichotomy between positivist and interpretivist philosophies by focusing on the research problem and the consequences of the inquiry (Morgan, 2014). It encourages the selection of methods based on what works in practice, making it appropriate for educational research where human, institutional, and environmental variables are interwoven. By adopting a pragmatic lens, the study gains flexibility to examine BECE results in both numerical and narrative terms, allowing for a richer understanding of the educational outcomes at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach adopted for this study is the mixed methods approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the trend analysis of BECE results in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School. This approach is suitable because it allows for the integration of numerical data on examination results over a specified period with qualitative insights from key stakeholders such as teachers and school administrators. The quantitative component of the study involves the collection and analysis of BECE Social Studies scores to identify performance trends, while the qualitative aspect explores the contextual and pedagogical factors that may influence these trends. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), the mixed methods approach is appropriate when the research questions require both statistical and narrative data to deepen understanding and support triangulation of findings.

The rationale for choosing this approach lies in its capacity to address the limitations inherent in using a single method. Quantitative data may reveal what changes have occurred over time, but qualitative data are crucial for explaining why those changes have happened. Furthermore,

the mixed methods approach aligns with the pragmatic research philosophy guiding this study, which emphasises the use of methods best suited to answering the research questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). By employing both approaches, the study ensures a more holistic exploration of BECE performance trends, offering both empirical rigour and contextual relevance.

3.3 Research Design

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, a two-phase approach in which quantitative data collection and analysis precede and inform subsequent qualitative exploration. According to Creswell and Clark (2017), this design is particularly effective when a researcher seeks to use qualitative data to explain or expand upon initial quantitative results. In the context of this research, the quantitative phase involves the use of document analysis, specifically focusing on trends and patterns in BECE Social Studies results at Afrancho Methodist JHS between 2020 and 2024. This phase provides measurable insights into performance outcomes such as mean scores, pass rates, and fluctuations across the years. Document analysis is recognised as a credible method for understanding educational outcomes because it enables researchers to systematically extract evidence from existing records, thereby identifying performance patterns and anomalies (Bowen, 2017; Creswell & Clark, 2017).

The explanatory sequential design is particularly appropriate for this study because it provides a structured way to link quantitative and qualitative findings. Quantitative data identify “what” is happening in terms of student performance, while qualitative data illuminate “why” these patterns occur (Creswell & Clark, 2017). For example, if the document analysis reveals a decline in performance during a particular year, the subsequent qualitative phase helps uncover contextual factors, such as teaching methods, curriculum challenges, or resource availability, that may explain the observed trend. This connection between phases ensures that the

qualitative component is directly informed by and responsive to the quantitative findings, enhancing the explanatory depth of the study (Shorten & Smith, 2017).

In the qualitative phase, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with Social Studies teachers at Afrancho Methodist JHS. The selection of teachers as participants is deliberate, as they are directly involved in curriculum delivery, student assessment, and classroom practices that influence examination outcomes. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in probing teachers' perspectives while maintaining a consistent structure aligned with the study's research questions (Kallio et al., 2016). This approach enables the researcher to explore in detail how teachers perceive factors influencing student performance, challenges faced in teaching Social Studies, and strategies they consider effective for improving outcomes. By capturing the lived experiences and professional insights of Social Studies teachers, the qualitative strand complements the statistical trends derived from the quantitative phase.

Integration of both phases occurs during interpretation, where qualitative insights are merged with quantitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of performance trends. Joint displays, as recommended by Creswell and Clark (2017), may be used to juxtapose quantitative results, such as yearly pass rates, with thematic explanations from teacher interviews. This integration not only validates the quantitative patterns but also provides nuanced, context-specific explanations that inform recommendations for practice. One strength of this approach is that it provides both breadth and depth: the document analysis offers an objective overview of performance trends, while the interviews provide rich, explanatory narratives from practitioners. Nonetheless, the sequential nature of the design requires careful planning to ensure smooth transition from quantitative to qualitative phases and may extend the duration of data collection (Shorten & Smith, 2017).

3.4 Study Area

Afrancho Methodist Junior High School is located in the Offinso North District of Ghana's Ashanti Region, one of the forty-three administrative districts established in 2008, with Akomadan as its capital. Covering roughly 956 km² and with a growing population of approximately 83,440 as of the 2021 census, the district embodies a balanced rural-urban dynamic, with around 78% of inhabitants residing in rural settlements, among them Afrancho and other communities along the Kumasi-Techiman corridor. The district lies between latitudes 6°00'N-6°30'N and longitudes 1°00'W-2°00'W, in the semi-equatorial forest zone nurtured by a bimodal rainfall pattern, which underpins much of its agrarian economy (GSS, 2021). Educational infrastructure in Offinso North includes several JHS institutions, with Afrancho Methodist JHS serving as the focus of this study.

This geographic and socio-economic context is significant: the mix of rural settings and small urban centres influences resource distribution, teacher allocation, and student socio-demographics: all factors that can impact BECE performance trends in Social Studies. Moreover, the district's proximity to larger urban hubs like Kumasi allows interaction with broader educational policies while reflecting localised challenges such as infrastructure constraints and teaching resource availability. Thus, Offinso North District provides a representative and context-rich setting for investigating how school-level factors interplay with district-level dynamics to shape BECE Social Studies outcomes.

3.5 Population of the Study

The population for this study is defined in alignment with its mixed methods explanatory sequential design, which involves both quantitative and qualitative strands. In the quantitative phase, the population comprises all Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) Social Studies results of Afrancho Methodist JHS spanning the years 2020 to 2024. This period was

chosen to capture recent and relevant data that reflect current educational practices, policies, and contextual factors influencing performance outcomes. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), quantitative studies often rely on well-documented archival or institutional data to identify measurable patterns and relationships. Document analysis of BECE results is appropriate because examination records are standardised, systematically maintained, and capable of providing objective evidence of student achievement trends over time (Bowen, 2017).

For the qualitative phase, the population consists of the headteacher and Social Studies teachers at Afrancho Methodist JHS. Teachers and the headteacher were selected because of their central role in curriculum delivery, student preparation, and classroom practices, which directly influence student outcomes in examinations. By engaging Social Studies teachers and the headteacher, the study captures insights into instructional practices, challenges encountered in teaching the subject, and perceived factors contributing to students' performance trends. The headteacher and teachers' professional expertise and direct involvement in preparing students for the BECE make them valuable sources of data, capable of explaining the patterns observed in the quantitative results. Defining the population in this twofold manner allows the study to maintain coherence between the quantitative and qualitative strands, as required in explanatory sequential mixed methods research (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for this study was drawn from both the quantitative and qualitative populations in order to maintain consistency with the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. For the quantitative strand, the sample consisted of all Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results in Social Studies from Afrancho Methodist JHS between 2020 and 2024. Since the study period was only five (5) years, the entire dataset of Social Studies results within this

timeframe was included, making the sampling approach a census of available records. A census approach is appropriate when the population is small and accessible, as it enhances the accuracy of trend analysis and eliminates sampling error (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By analysing the complete set of results, the study ensures that the observed trends are comprehensive and representative of student performance at the school during the specified period.

For the qualitative strand, the sample consisted of the headteacher and all three (3) Social Studies teachers at Afrancho Methodist JHS. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select these participants because they are directly responsible for the teaching and preparation of students in Social Studies. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to deliberately target participants with specialised knowledge and experience relevant to the research objectives (Tisdell, Merriam, & Stuckey-Peyrot, 2025). In this case, the headteacher and Social Studies teachers were chosen because they could provide first-hand accounts of instructional strategies, challenges, and contextual factors that contribute to the performance patterns reflected in the BECE results. Including the headteacher and all three (3) Social Studies teachers ensured that diverse perspectives within the school were captured, thereby enhancing the credibility and richness of the qualitative data.

This combination of census sampling for the quantitative data and purposive sampling for the qualitative data aligns with recommendations for mixed methods research, where different strands may require different sampling approaches depending on the nature of the data (Creswell & Clark, 2017). While the census of BECE results provides the breadth needed to identify performance trends over time, the purposive selection of teachers provides the depth required to interpret and explain those trends. Together, these sampling approaches ensure that the study generates a holistic understanding of the factors influencing Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

For this study, two primary data collection instruments were employed: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. These instruments were carefully selected to align with the explanatory sequential mixed methods design adopted for the research. The quantitative phase relied on document analysis of the BECE results in Social Studies from Afrancho Methodist JHS between 2020 and 2024. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating existing documents to extract meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2017). It was particularly suitable for this study because BECE results are official, reliable records that provide measurable evidence of students' performance trends. In addition, document analysis ensures objectivity, as the data are not influenced by the researcher's interpretation at the point of collection (O'Leary, 2017).

The qualitative phase of the study employed semi-structured interviews with the three Social Studies teachers at Afrancho Methodist JHS. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allow flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives while maintaining a focus on key research questions (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guide was designed to elicit teachers' views on the factors contributing to students' performance, their instructional practices, and possible strategies for improving Social Studies achievement. This instrument was appropriate because teachers, as practitioners directly involved in instruction, possess experiential insights that cannot be captured through quantitative data alone. Semi-structured interviews also encourage rich, descriptive responses while allowing the researcher to probe for clarification and deeper insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The combination of document analysis and semi-structured interviews enhances the validity and robustness of the study findings. While document analysis provided a factual account of students' performance trends over the years, interviews provided contextual explanations that

helped interpret the observed results. This triangulation of data collection instruments is consistent with the logic of mixed methods research, where multiple sources of evidence are used to strengthen the credibility of conclusions (Fetters & Freshwater, 2015). Consequently, the integration of these two instruments offered a comprehensive understanding of Social Studies performance trends at Afrancho Methodist JHS and the underlying factors influencing them.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure for the study was carefully planned and executed to ensure that relevant, accurate, and comprehensive data were gathered to address the research objectives. This procedure involved a systematic process, including preparation, engagement with the school and stakeholders, actual data collection, and post-collection validation.

To begin with, a formal request was made to the Afrancho Methodist Junior High School and the Offinso North District Education Directorate for permission to conduct the study. This included submitting an introductory letter from the researcher's academic institution (University of Education, Winneba), outlining the purpose of the research and assuring all parties of confidentiality and the non-intrusive nature of the data collection process. Upon receiving approval, the researcher scheduled a meeting with the headteacher and the relevant stakeholders to explain the objectives of the study and seek their cooperation.

The process of data collection for this study began with the collection of quantitative data before proceeding to the qualitative phase. In the first phase, documentary data were collected from the official records of Afrancho Methodist JHS. Specifically, BECE Social Studies results from 2020 to 2024 were obtained from the school's administrative office in collaboration with the head teacher. This phase involved retrieving authentic examination records, compiling the

results, and organising them into analysable formats. Care was taken to ensure accuracy, completeness, and confidentiality of the data.

Following the quantitative phase, the qualitative data collection was undertaken through semi-structured interviews with all three (3) Social Studies teachers at Afrancho Methodist JHS. The interview guide, developed in line with the research objectives, was pre-tested to ensure clarity and relevance of the questions. The interviews were scheduled at times convenient to the teachers, and each session lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Permission was sought to record the conversations using a digital recorder, while supplementary notes were taken during the sessions to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations.

Ethical considerations were embedded throughout the data collection procedure. Before accessing the documents, formal approval was sought from the school administration. Similarly, informed consent was obtained from each teacher prior to the interviews. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, with codes assigned in place of names during transcription and reporting. Such ethical practices enhance trustworthiness and credibility of the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Finally, the data collection procedure was designed to ensure a smooth integration of the two phases. The results obtained from the document analysis were analysed and preliminary findings identified before the interviews commenced. These preliminary trends informed some of the follow-up probes during the interviews, enabling the qualitative data to provide explanatory depth for the quantitative trends. This sequential process ensured complementarity between the two datasets, which is central to explanatory sequential mixed-methods designs (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

The study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, and therefore the data analysis plan was structured to integrate both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The first phase involved the analysis of quantitative data derived from official BECE Social Studies results of Afrancho Methodist JHS from 2020 to 2024. This document analysis provided descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, and trend patterns, to identify fluctuations in students' performance across the five-year period. Statistical analysis was used to track changes over time and compare year-to-year outcomes, thereby establishing the foundation for deeper qualitative exploration (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In the second phase, qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with the headteacher and the three (3) Social Studies teachers at Afrancho Methodist JHS were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically. The coding framework developed for this study guided the analysis, ensuring that responses were systematically organised into themes aligned with the research objectives. The main themes included: (1) factors influencing performance, and (2) strategies for improvement. This thematic approach facilitated the identification of recurring patterns and differences in teachers' perspectives, ensuring that qualitative findings complemented and explained the quantitative results (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Integration of the two datasets occurred during the interpretation stage. Specifically, quantitative findings from document analysis provided baseline trends in Social Studies performance, while qualitative insights from interviews explained the underlying factors and proposed strategies. This approach not only validated the numerical trends but also enriched them with contextual depth (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

Thus, the data analysis plan ensured a coherent link between the numerical evidence and participants' lived experiences, allowing for robust conclusions on performance trends, influencing factors, and strategies for improvement in BECE Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS.

3.10 Validity and Reliability

Ensuring validity, reliability, and trustworthiness is essential in mixed-methods research, particularly in studies that combine quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more holistic understanding of educational outcomes. In this study, validity was first ensured in the quantitative strand through the use of official BECE Social Studies results from 2020 to 2024. Since these results were obtained directly from Afrancho Methodist JHS's records, they possessed high content and criterion validity, reflecting actual student performance without researcher manipulation. Bowen (2017) emphasises that document analysis enhances validity by drawing from authentic, verifiable records, thereby ensuring that the findings are grounded in credible evidence.

For the qualitative strand, validity was enhanced through the careful design of a semi-structured interview guide, which was aligned with the study's research objectives. The guide was reviewed by the research supervisor and an experienced Social Studies teacher to confirm its clarity, appropriateness, and ability to generate meaningful responses.

Reliability was also a central consideration. In the quantitative strand, reliability was maintained through systematic collection and cross-verification of BECE results with official school records. In the qualitative strand, reliability was enhanced by applying the same interview protocol consistently to all three (3) Social Studies teachers at Afrancho Methodist JHS. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy, while member checking was conducted by giving participants the opportunity to review their

transcripts for correctness. Member checking is widely acknowledged as a powerful way of ensuring dependable and credible qualitative data (Birt et al., 2016).

In addition, the qualitative strand was strengthened through the concept of trustworthiness, which encompasses credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). Credibility was ensured through member checking and prolonged engagement with the data to allow for deeper interpretation. Dependability was addressed by maintaining an audit trail that documented the research process, including how data were collected, transcribed, and analysed. Confirmability was reinforced by minimising researcher bias through verbatim transcription and by cross-checking coding decisions with a research supervisor. Transferability was enhanced by providing thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and findings, enabling readers to determine the applicability of results to other settings.

By combining these measures, the study ensured validity and reliability in the quantitative strand, while establishing trustworthiness in the qualitative strand. Together, these strategies enhance the overall rigor of the research and ensure that the findings on trends, influencing factors, and strategies for improving BECE Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS are both credible and dependable.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were a central component in the design and execution of this study. In accordance with standard research protocols and institutional guidelines, the researcher took deliberate steps to ensure that participants' rights, privacy, and well-being were safeguarded throughout the research process.

First, formal approval was sought from the appropriate educational authorities. A letter of introduction from the researcher's academic institution was submitted to the Offinso North District Education Directorate and the headteacher of Afrancho Methodist JHS to obtain permission to conduct the study. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. All respondents were briefed on the purpose of the research, the nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any point without any negative consequences.

To ensure informed consent, participants were given a consent form to read and sign before participating in interviews. This form clearly outlined the study's objectives, the expected duration of involvement, how data would be used, and measures to ensure confidentiality. Participants' identities were kept anonymous by assigning codes instead of using names, and any direct quotes used in reporting were carefully worded to prevent identification.

Furthermore, all data collected were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes. The researcher also committed to honesty, objectivity, and transparency in the analysis and reporting of results.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodological framework adopted for the study. Guided by a pragmatic philosophy, the research employed a mixed-methods approach using an explanatory sequential design. This design allowed the study to first analyse quantitative data from BECE Social Studies results (2020-2024) through document analysis, and then use qualitative interviews with Social Studies teachers to provide richer explanations for observed performance trends. The combination of these two phases ensured that measurable outcomes were complemented with contextual insights.

The study population reflected both strands of the design. Quantitative data included all Social Studies BECE results from the selected five-year period, while the qualitative strand engaged all three Social Studies teachers at Afrancho Methodist JHS, selected purposively for their direct role in teaching and assessment. Data were collected through document analysis and semi-structured interviews, following ethical protocols such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics to establish trends and patterns, whereas qualitative data were examined thematically through coding aligned with the research objectives. Validity and reliability were assured through the use of official records for quantitative analysis, while member checking, audit trails, and detailed descriptions enhanced the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings.

Overall, the methodological choices including research philosophy, design, population, sampling, instruments, and analysis techniques provided a robust framework for answering the research questions. These approaches ensured that the study's findings would be both credible and meaningful in addressing performance trends in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the study on the trend analysis of BECE results in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS. Guided by the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the chapter begins with the quantitative results obtained from the document analysis of BECE Social Studies scores between 2020 and 2024. These results highlight the overall performance trends, including fluctuations, mean scores, and pass rates across the five-year period. Tables, charts, and graphs are employed where necessary to illustrate the statistical outcomes clearly and to make the patterns more easily interpretable.

The chapter then proceeds to the qualitative results obtained through semi-structured interviews with the Social Studies teachers. Their perspectives provide context to the numerical findings by explaining the factors that contribute to fluctuations in performance, challenges encountered in the teaching and learning of Social Studies, and strategies for improvement. Finally, the chapter integrates both sets of findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of performance trends by aligning statistical results with interpretative discussions grounded in relevant literature. This integration combines the objectivity of quantitative analysis with the lived experiences of teachers and the headteacher, thereby offering a more holistic view of Social Studies outcomes at Afrancho Methodist JHS.

4.1 Quantitative Results

4.1.1 Overview of Candidate Performance

Table 1 presents the total number of candidates from Afrancho Methodist JHS who sat for the BECE in Social Studies between 2020 and 2024.

Table 1 Number of BECE Social Studies Candidates from Afrancho Methodist JHS (2020-2024)

Year	No. of Candidates
2020	98
2021	105
2022	110
2023	95
2024	102

Overall, the number of candidates fluctuated moderately across the five-year period, reflecting variations in school enrolment and retention.

In 2020, the school presented 98 candidates, which increased steadily to 105 in 2021 and further to 110 in 2022. This upward trend suggests growth in enrolment during this period, indicating improved access, retention, or confidence of parents and students in the school's ability to prepare candidates for the examination. However, there was a notable drop in 2023, with the number of candidates reducing to 95, the lowest within the period under review.

In 2024, the number of candidates rose again to 102, showing a recovery from the 2023 decline but still falling short of the peak recorded in 2022. This suggests that although the school managed to stabilise its candidate population, it has not yet regained the momentum achieved during its period of steady growth.

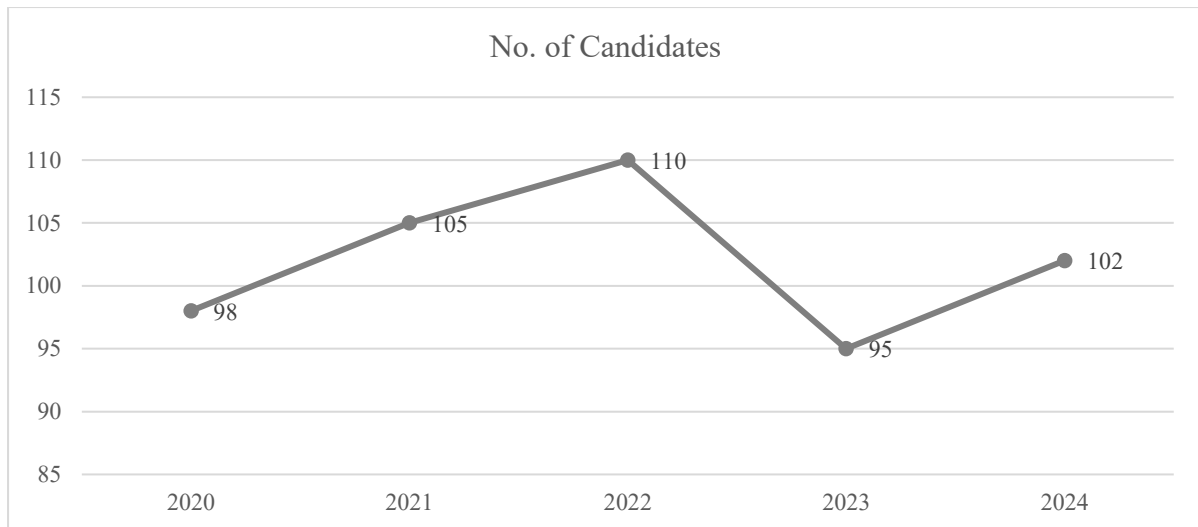


Figure 2 Line Graph Showing Trend in the Number of Candidates from 2020-2024

The line graph illustrates the trend in the number of BECE candidates from Afrancho Methodist JHS between 2020 and 2024. The figure shows a consistent upward movement from 98 candidates in 2020 to a peak of 110 in 2022, indicating a period of steady growth in enrolment. However, a sharp decline occurred in 2023, with only 95 candidates presented, representing the lowest within the five-year period. This drop was followed by a recovery in 2024, where the number rose to 102 candidates.

Table 2 Gender Distribution and Average Grades of Afrancho Methodist JHS BECE Social Studies Candidates (2020-2024)

Year	Number of Male	Number of Female	Male Average Grade	Female Average Grade
2020	52	46	5.2	4.7
2021	56	49	5.0	4.6
2022	58	52	5.3	4.9
2023	50	45	5.1	4.8
2024	54	48	4.9	4.5

The gender distribution of candidates presented for the BECE at Afrancho Methodist JHS between 2020 and 2024 shows a relatively balanced participation between males and females. Across the five years, the number of male candidates remained slightly higher than that of females, but the gap was not significant. As shown in Table 2, in 2020 the school presented 52 males and 46 females, while in 2022, the highest enrolment year, 58 males and 52 females were recorded. This balance suggests that both male and female students at Afrancho Methodist JHS had nearly equal opportunities to progress to the BECE level during the period under review.

Performance trends by gender reveal that female students consistently achieved slightly better average grades compared to their male counterparts. For instance, in 2020, females recorded an average grade of 4.7 compared to 5.2 recorded by males. A similar pattern was observed in subsequent years, with female average grades ranging between 4.5 and 4.9, while male averages remained between 4.9 and 5.3. Although the differences were modest, the consistency indicates that female candidates generally outperformed males in Social Studies over the five-year period.

Table 3: Table 3 General Performance of Afrancho Methodist JHS BECE Social Studies Candidates (2020-2024)

Year	No. of Candidates	No. of Passes (Grade 1-6)	% Pass Rate	Average Score (Grade)	Remark
2020	98	75	76.5%	5.2	Above Average
2021	105	81	77.1%	5.1	Above Average
2022	110	69	62.7%	6.3	Average
2023	95	52	54.7%	7.0	Below Average
2024	102	89	87.3%	4.6	Excellent

In 2020, the school presented 98 candidates, of which 75 passed, representing a pass rate of 76.5%. The average score of 5.2 placed the school's performance in the "Above Average"

category. A similar trend was observed in 2021, when 105 candidates were presented and 81 passed, translating into a slightly improved pass rate of 77.1% and an average grade of 5.1, still classified as “Above Average.” These results suggest that the school maintained steady performance during this period. However, 2022 marked a significant decline in performance. Although the number of candidates increased to 110, only 69 passed, leading to a reduced pass rate of 62.7%. The average score worsened to 6.3, dropping the overall performance to the “Average” category. This decline became more pronounced in 2023 when only 52 out of 95 candidates passed, resulting in a pass rate of 54.7% and an average grade of 7.0, which is considered “Below Average.” A strong recovery was observed in 2024, when the number of candidates rose to 102 and 89 of them passed, giving the school its highest pass rate within the study period at 87.3%. The average grade of 4.6 indicated “Excellent” performance, marking a remarkable turnaround from the previous two years of decline.

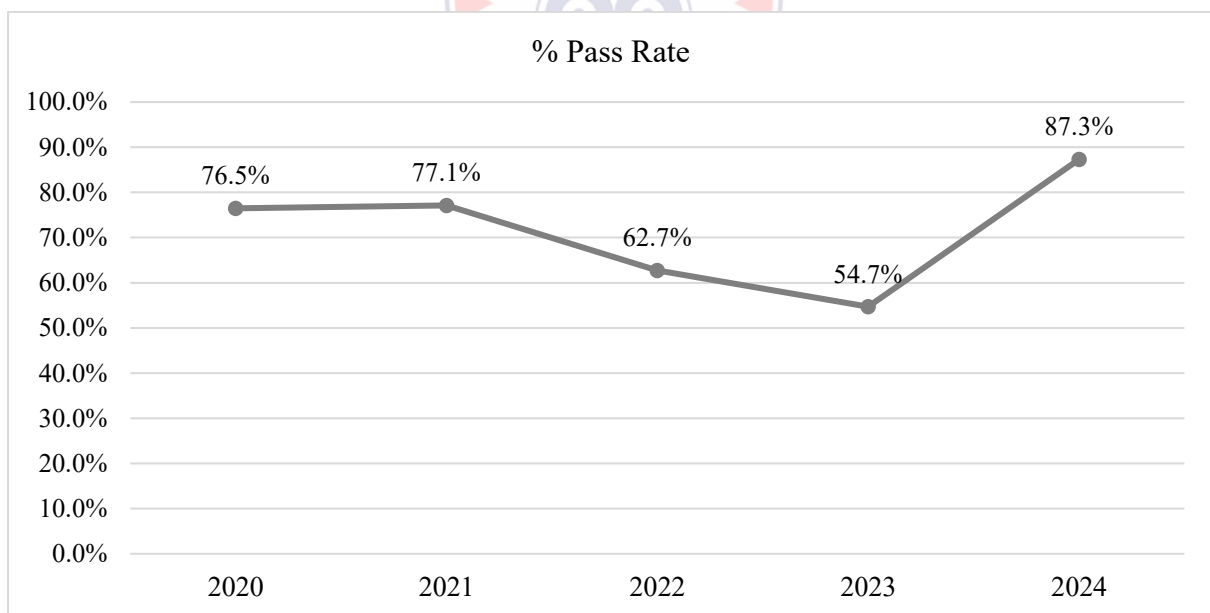


Figure 3 Pass Rate Trend of Afrancho JHS BECE Social Studies (2020-2024)

Figure 2 shows a fluctuating pattern over the five-year period. Pass rates were relatively stable in 2020 (76.5%) and 2021 (77.1%), before declining sharply in 2022 (62.7%) and further in

2023 (54.7%). However, 2024 witnessed a remarkable recovery, with the pass rate rising to 87.3%, the highest within the study period.

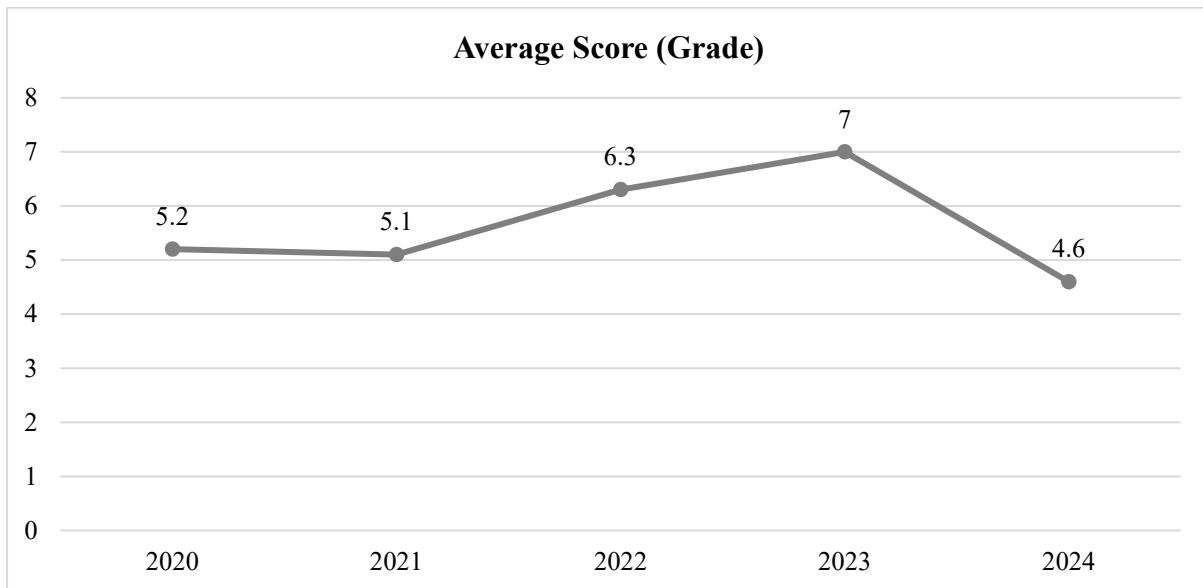


Figure 4 Average Grade Trend of Afrancho Methodist JHS BECE Social Studies (2020-2024)

Figure 3 mirrors this fluctuation observed in Figure 2. Average grades were strong in 2020 (5.2) and 2021 (5.1), worsened during the decline years of 2022 (6.3) and 2023 (7.0), and then improved significantly in 2024 (4.6). Since lower grades represent better performance, the inverted grade curve confirms the sharp drop in achievement during the mid-years followed by a notable rebound in the final year. Together, the two figures provide a consistent picture of performance fluctuations characterised by early stability, mid-period decline, and a strong recovery in the final year.

4.1.2 Trends in Performance Over Five Years

The overall performance of Afrancho Methodist JHS candidates in BECE Social Studies from 2020 to 2024 reveals a fluctuating trend, as shown in Table 3, and Figures 2 and 3. In 2020 and 2021, performance was relatively stable, with pass rates of 76.5% and 77.1% respectively,

supported by average grades of 5.2 and 5.1. These results were categorised as “Above Average,” reflecting steady outcomes in the early part of the study period.

However, the graphs clearly highlight a sharp decline in performance during 2022 and 2023. In 2022, despite presenting the highest number of candidates (110), the school recorded only 69 passes, representing a 62.7% pass rate with an average grade of 6.3, classified as “Average.” This downward trend deepened in 2023, when the pass rate fell further to 54.7% and the average grade worsened to 7.0, resulting in a “Below Average” classification. Both the line showing pass rates and the inverted grade curve emphasise this dip as the lowest point in the five-year period.

In 2024, the school experienced a dramatic improvement, as evidenced by both the table and the graphs. The pass rate rose sharply to 87.3%, the highest in the five-year span, while the average grade improved to 4.6, which is rated “Excellent.” This recovery not only reversed the two-year decline but also surpassed the performance of the earlier years, making 2024 the strongest year overall. The convergence of high pass rates and improved average grades in the graph provides a visual confirmation of this significant turnaround.

Taken together, the table and figures demonstrate that the school’s performance in Social Studies has not followed a consistent linear pattern but has instead fluctuated, with periods of stability, decline, and eventual recovery. These fluctuations point to the dynamic nature of performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS and raise important questions about the institutional, instructional, and contextual factors that influenced both the decline in 2022–2023 and the remarkable improvement in 2024.

4.2 Qualitative Results

This section presents the qualitative findings obtained from semi-structured interviews with the three Social Studies teachers and the headteacher at Afrancho Methodist JHS. The aim of this phase of the study was to provide contextual explanations for the performance trends observed in the quantitative analysis and to capture the lived experiences of teachers directly involved in teaching and preparing students for the BECE. By exploring their perspectives, the study seeks to identify the key factors influencing students' performance, the challenges teachers encounter in delivering Social Studies instruction, and the strategies that could help improve outcomes in the subject.

The analysis of the interview data was guided by the research objectives and organised thematically to reflect emerging patterns and issues raised by participants. Key themes include teacher-related factors, school-level factors, student-related factors, and external and contextual factors. Each theme is presented with illustrative insights from the teachers and the headteacher, providing rich qualitative evidence to complement the statistical results reported earlier.

4.2.1 Factors Influencing Student Performance in Social Studies

The qualitative findings from the interviews with Social Studies teachers at the school provided rich insights into the factors influencing students' performance in the BECE. The analysis revealed that performance outcomes are shaped by multiple interconnected elements that extend beyond classroom instruction alone. Teachers highlighted the significance of their own instructional practices and professional development, the availability of resources and the role of school leadership, students' attitudes and study habits, as well as broader external factors such as parental involvement, curriculum demands, and examination pressures. To capture these perspectives systematically, the findings are presented thematically under four broad

categories: teacher-related factors, school-level factors, student-related factors, and external and contextual factors. Each theme is discussed in detail with reference to the lived experiences of teachers and their observations of student performance trends.

Teacher-Related Factors Influencing Performance

One of the recurring themes from the interviews with Social Studies teachers was the critical role of teacher-related factors in shaping students' performance in the BECE. Teachers emphasised that their subject mastery and pedagogical approaches directly affect how well students grasp key concepts. For instance, one participant explained that *“qualified teachers with good methods produce better results; rushing through the syllabus reduces understanding.”* Another participant added that when she used debates and group discussions, students became more engaged and performed better in assessments. In contrast, she cautioned that *“depending only on lectures makes students memorize without really understanding,”* which often led to weaker performance in questions requiring application and critical thinking.

Time allocation and workload emerged as another major concern. The teachers explained that the limited number of periods allocated to Social Studies, compared with other core subjects, constrained their ability to cover the broad syllabus thoroughly. One participant commented that *“time is a big challenge – we don't get enough periods for such a broad syllabus,”* while another noted that this forced them to rush through certain topics without ensuring student understanding. Large class sizes also added pressure, making it difficult to provide individualised attention and remedial support for weaker students.

Teacher motivation and opportunities for professional development were equally emphasised. While the teachers expressed strong dedication to their work, they acknowledged that limited access to in-service training hindered their ability to improve teaching strategies. One participant, for example, remarked that *“interactive teaching improves performance, while*

lecture methods alone limit application,” but added that without refresher workshops or updated training, many teachers continued to rely on traditional methods. Another participant supported this observation, stating that “*teacher competence and the use of varied methods are critical to sustained improvement,*” and he stressed that ongoing supervision and recognition of teachers’ efforts play a key role in maintaining motivation.

Collectively, these insights underscore that teacher-related factors, ranging from subject expertise and teaching methodology to workload, motivation, and professional development are central to understanding performance trends in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS.

The findings highlight that teacher-related factors, particularly subject mastery, pedagogical methods, instructional time, workload, and professional development play a decisive role in shaping Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS. Teachers noted that interactive strategies such as debates and group discussions improved student engagement and outcomes, while overreliance on lectures led to rote learning and poor application in examinations. This aligns with Baidoo-Anu and DeLuca (2023), who argued that Ghanaian Social Studies instruction often emphasises memorization at the expense of critical thinking, thereby limiting examination success. Similarly, Adams (2022) found that teacher qualification and pedagogical competence strongly predict Social Studies performance, a finding echoed in this study where teachers linked student outcomes directly to their own instructional approaches.

Time allocation and workload challenges also emerged prominently, with teachers lamenting that insufficient contact hours constrained their ability to thoroughly cover the broad Social Studies syllabus. This observation is consistent with Baidoo-Anu and DeLuca (2023), who identified inadequate instructional time as a key barrier to performance, and with Abaka (2019), who highlighted curriculum overload as a factor that forces teachers to rush content delivery.

Moreover, the strain of handling large classes in Afrancho Methodist JHS mirrors the systemic concerns noted in Asante et al. (2024), who linked fluctuating BECE performance across schools to resource and management disparities.

Finally, the teachers' emphasis on motivation and professional development resonates with Eric and Tobias' (2020) findings that teacher supervision, recognition, and continuous training enhance consistency in BECE outcomes. Limited in-service training in Afrancho Methodist JHS thus reflects a wider national challenge, where professional growth opportunities remain unevenly distributed. Collectively, these convergences between empirical literature and field findings reinforce the Systems Theory of Education, which posits that weaknesses in teacher capacity can reverberate across the entire school system, thereby shaping academic results.

School-Level Factors: Resources, Leadership, and Supervision

The interviews further revealed that school-level factors play a crucial role in influencing students' performance in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS. A key issue raised by the teachers was the availability of teaching and learning resources. They emphasised that although Social Studies requires visual aids, textbooks, and real-life case materials to make concepts more relatable, these resources were often inadequate. One participant explained that *"lack of textbooks is a serious challenge; students often share materials,"* while another pointed out that *"charts and case studies make lessons easier to understand."* Participants agreed that when resources such as maps, past question booklets, and supplementary texts were made available, students were better prepared and demonstrated stronger exam readiness.

Leadership and supervision were also identified as significant determinants of performance. Teachers consistently linked effective supervision with improved teaching and learning outcomes. One participant noted that *"when the head monitors and provides feedback, results improve,"* while another observed that *"weak supervision leads to laxity in lesson delivery."*

Another participant affirmed this perspective, stressing that *“leadership must ensure accountability, and I try to provide that.”* He explained that strategies such as organising mock examinations and ensuring follow-up corrections had a direct impact on the improved results seen in 2024. Conversely, all participants acknowledged that lapses in supervision during 2022 and 2023 contributed to the dip in performance in those years.

The overall school environment was another dimension emphasised by the participants. They pointed out that discipline, punctuality, and general commitment to academic work shaped how well students prepared for the BECE. According to one participant, *“when the school management fosters a culture of seriousness, students are more motivated to take Social Studies seriously.”* However, absenteeism and inadequate follow-up on underperforming students were cited as persistent challenges that negatively influenced results in some years.

Discussion of Results

The findings highlight that school-level factors, particularly resources, leadership, supervision, and the general learning environment play a pivotal role in shaping Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS. Teachers underscored the inadequacy of teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, maps, and past question booklets, which limited both instructional delivery and students’ independent learning. This observation aligns with Baidoo-Anu and DeLuca (2023), who found that insufficient instructional resources constrained Social Studies teaching in urban and peri-urban schools, contributing to weaker outcomes compared to other core subjects. Similarly, Asante et al. (2024) observed that disparities in the availability of teaching resources across Ashanti Region schools partly explained fluctuations in BECE performance trends.

Leadership and supervision also emerged as critical determinants of performance in this study. Teachers and the headteacher emphasised that active monitoring, feedback, and accountability

mechanisms improved instructional delivery, while weak supervision in 2022 and 2023 contributed to the decline in results. These findings support Eric and Tobias' (2020) argument that proactive leadership and effective supervision enhance BECE consistency by motivating teachers and sustaining classroom quality. The marked improvement in 2024, attributed to closer supervision and the introduction of mock examinations, also resonates with Olutola's (2017) conclusion that institutional leadership directly influences academic performance through supportive practices and accountability structures.

Finally, the general school environment including discipline, punctuality, and follow-up on underperforming students was reported as shaping students' commitment to Social Studies. Teachers observed that when school leadership fostered a culture of seriousness, students were more motivated, a point consistent with Abaka's (2019) claim that effective school cultures reduce absenteeism and disengagement. Taken together, these findings and the literature confirm that resources, leadership, and supervision are interconnected levers that significantly influence Social Studies performance trends at the school level.

Student-Related Factors: Attitudes, Engagement, and Study Habits

Participants consistently emphasised that student-related factors had a significant influence on Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS. A recurring concern was students' attitudes toward the subject. Participants explained that many learners undervalued Social Studies compared to subjects like Mathematics and Integrated Science. One participant noted that *"students often see Social Studies as an 'easy' subject, so they don't dedicate enough time to study it."* Another participant added that this perception led to weak preparation, particularly for higher-order BECE questions that demanded application and critical thinking. Another participant also observed that *"family environment and parental attitudes shape how seriously*

students take the subject,” reinforcing the idea that student motivation is linked to broader socio-cultural influences.

Classroom engagement was also identified as a major determinant of performance. Participants observed that students who actively participated in group discussions, debates, and problem-solving activities performed better than those who remained passive. One participant explained that *“interactive teaching improves performance,”* but also admitted that participation varied across cohorts. Participants agreed that low participation and lack of concentration were especially noticeable in 2022 and 2023, when performance dipped, suggesting that disengagement contributed to the poor results in those years.

Study habits outside the classroom were another key issue raised during the interviews. Participants reported that many students lacked consistent reading routines or independent learning habits. One participant remarked that *“students rely too much on last-minute preparation, and it shows in their weak exam performance.”* Another emphasised that homework and revision practices were often neglected, partly due to poor parental supervision and lack of access to learning resources. However, teachers also noted that students who reviewed notes regularly, practiced past questions, or engaged in group studies tended to achieve higher grades.

Taken together, the participants’ perspectives highlight that students’ perceptions of Social Studies, their classroom engagement, and their study habits significantly influenced performance outcomes over the years. The poor attitudes and inconsistent study practices that contributed to the decline in 2022 and 2023 contrast sharply with the stronger commitment and improved engagement reflected in the excellent results of 2024.

The findings of this study also revealed that student-related factors, particularly attitudes, engagement, and study habits, strongly influenced Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS. A persistent concern was students' tendency to undervalue Social Studies compared to Mathematics and Integrated Science, often perceiving it as an "easy" subject that required minimal effort. This resulted in weaker preparation, especially for questions requiring critical thinking and application. Such findings are consistent with Olutola (2017), who reported that students' subject perceptions and motivation significantly influence performance, with Social Studies often deprioritised due to societal emphasis on science-oriented subjects. Similarly, Baidoo-Anu and DeLuca (2023) argued that students' attitudes toward Social Studies contribute to its comparatively lower performance outcomes.

Classroom engagement was also highlighted as a key determinant of outcomes. Participants observed that active involvement in debates, group work, and problem-solving enhanced performance, whereas disengagement and lack of concentration were associated with the poorer results in 2022 and 2023. This observation reflects Abaka's (2019) critique of rote-based instruction, which limits opportunities for active learning and reduces students' ability to apply knowledge meaningfully. In contrast, interactive participation fosters deeper understanding, supporting findings by Asante et al. (2024), who emphasised the role of student motivation and engagement in sustaining academic performance trends.

Study habits outside the classroom further shaped outcomes. Teachers reported that inconsistent routines, last-minute preparation, and neglect of homework contributed to underperformance, echoing Uwezo's (2014) finding that weak home learning environments limit student readiness for standardized examinations. Conversely, students who engaged in consistent revision, group studies, and practice with past questions demonstrated stronger

results, mirroring Eric and Tobias' (2020) observation that effective student learning practices, reinforced by supervision, enhance performance outcomes.

Overall, these findings align with existing literature in showing that student attitudes, engagement, and independent study practices are critical drivers of BECE Social Studies performance, with improved commitment in 2024 demonstrating their positive impact.

External and Contextual Factors: Parents, Curriculum, and Examination Pressure

Beyond teacher, school, and student-related factors, the interviews revealed that broader external and contextual influences also shaped students' performance in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS. A recurring issue raised was parental involvement. Participants consistently stressed that students with supportive parents performed better because they received encouragement and supervision at home. One of them explained that *"home support matters a lot. Students with engaged parents perform better,"* while another added that parents often undervalued Social Studies compared to Mathematics and Science, which influenced how students themselves perceived the subject. Another participant confirmed this view, noting that *"family environment influences commitment to study,"* and he pointed out that in households where parents were either disengaged or constrained by economic pressures, students struggled to dedicate adequate time and focus to their learning.

Curriculum design also emerged as a significant external factor. Participants described the Social Studies syllabus as overloaded, making it difficult to explore topics in depth. One participant remarked that *"time is a big challenge – we don't get enough periods for such a broad syllabus,"* and this, they argued, led to rushing through content without ensuring understanding. They noted that this issue was particularly evident in 2022 and 2023 when performance declined, as students felt overwhelmed by the breadth of topics and struggled to apply concepts in exam settings.

Examination pressure was another contextual factor highlighted by the participants. The participants observed that the high-stakes nature of the BECE often created anxiety and stress among students. One participant explained that “*students rely too much on last-minute preparation, and it shows in their weak exam performance,*” while another linked nervousness and lack of confidence directly to the poor outcomes in 2022 and 2023. Another participant also pointed out that “*mock exams and follow-up corrections*” introduced in 2024 helped students become more confident and reduced their exam anxiety, contributing to the excellent results in that year.

The findings indicate that external and contextual factors, particularly parental involvement, curriculum design, and examination pressure, significantly influence Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS. Teachers consistently emphasised that parental support was crucial, with engaged parents motivating students to study and providing basic resources, while disengaged or economically constrained families left learners struggling. This observation aligns with Uwezo’s (2014) findings in East Africa, which highlighted the strong link between home learning environments and academic performance. Similarly, Olutola (2017) observed that parental attitudes toward subjects directly influenced students’ perceptions and effort, with Social Studies often deprioritised in favour of Mathematics and Science, a concern echoed by participants in this study.

Curriculum design also emerged as a key external factor. Participants described the Social Studies syllabus as overloaded, with insufficient instructional time to explore topics deeply. This led to rushed teaching and surface-level understanding, particularly in 2022 and 2023 when results declined. Such concerns resonate with Abaka (2019), who argued that curriculum overload and emphasis on memorization hinder meaningful learning in Social Studies, and with Baidoo-Anu and DeLuca (2023), who stressed that systemic challenges, including

misalignment between syllabus scope and classroom realities, contribute to poor BECE outcomes.

Examination pressure further compounded these challenges. Teachers observed that the high-stakes nature of the BECE generated anxiety and reduced student confidence, undermining performance in critical years. This finding mirrors Mullis et al. (2020), who noted that standardized exam pressure often amplifies disparities in achievement, particularly where learners lack adequate preparation strategies. The introduction of mock examinations in 2024, which helped reduce anxiety and build confidence, directly contributed to improved performance, echoing Eric and Tobias' (2020) emphasis on structured preparatory interventions as critical for examination readiness.

Overall, the findings align with existing literature in showing that parental engagement, curriculum design, and examination pressure are influential contextual factors that interact with school and student-level dynamics to shape Social Studies performance trends.

4.2.2 Strategies to Improve Students' Performance in Social Studies

The participants identified several strategies that could help sustain and further improve students' performance in Social Studies at the BECE level. A recurring suggestion was the need to allocate more instructional time to the subject. Participants explained that the broad and content-heavy nature of the Social Studies curriculum made it difficult to complete the syllabus thoroughly within the current timetable allocation. One participant emphasised that *"time is a big challenge – we don't get enough periods for such a broad syllabus,"* and recommended that Social Studies periods be increased to allow for in-depth teaching, revision, and remediation for weaker students.

Another strategy centered on diversifying teaching methods and making lessons more interactive. Teachers reported that approaches such as debates, group discussions, and the use of case studies improved student participation and encouraged critical thinking. A participant highlighted that *“interactive teaching improves performance, while lecture methods alone limit application.”* To build on this, participants suggested integrating ICT tools, visual aids, and locally relevant materials to make lessons more engaging and relatable.

Provision of adequate resources was also highlighted as a priority. Teachers stressed that updated textbooks, past question booklets, and teaching aids such as maps and charts would enhance both instructional delivery and independent student study. One participant noted that *“past questions and maps help students prepare well,”* while another pointed out that securing these resources was essential for sustaining the strong performance achieved in 2024.

Strengthening leadership and supervision also emerged as a critical strategy. Participants acknowledged that supportive leadership practices, such as organising regular mock exams, observing lessons, and providing feedback, had contributed to the 2024 improvement. One participant explained that *“mock exams and follow-up corrections”* helped build students’ confidence and reduced exam anxiety. The participant further emphasised the importance of continuous teacher professional development, including workshops and training sessions tailored to Social Studies pedagogy and assessment techniques.

Finally, the role of parents and the wider community was underscored. Participants believed that parental involvement in supervising homework, encouraging consistent study, and valuing Social Studies alongside other core subjects would significantly enhance performance. As one participant remarked, *“parents should supervise homework,”* while another added that *“educational authorities should provide training workshops”* to equip teachers with innovative

strategies. These suggestions highlight that improving performance requires collaboration between the school, families, and external stakeholders.

The findings of this study reveal that teachers at the school identified a range of strategies to sustain and improve Social Studies performance, many of which align with existing literature. A recurring recommendation was the need to increase instructional time to adequately address the broad Social Studies syllabus. Teachers explained that insufficient periods forced them to rush through topics, undermining deep understanding. This reflects Abaka's (2019) argument that curriculum overload and limited teaching time weaken students' ability to master Social Studies concepts and apply them effectively in BECE examinations.

Diversifying teaching methods was another widely emphasised strategy. Participants noted that interactive approaches such as debates, discussions, and case studies encouraged critical thinking and deeper engagement compared to lecture-based methods. This aligns with Baidoo-Anu and DeLuca (2023), who found that traditional rote approaches contribute to underperformance in Social Studies, whereas active learning strategies foster improved outcomes. Calls to integrate ICT tools and locally relevant materials further resonate with Asante et al. (2024), who highlighted the importance of innovative and contextually grounded instructional practices in sustaining performance improvements.

The provision of adequate resources was also highlighted, with teachers stressing the value of updated textbooks, past questions, and teaching aids. Similar concerns were raised by Olutola (2017), who found that schools with better access to instructional resources consistently outperformed under-resourced ones. Additionally, the importance of leadership and supervision, through mock exams, feedback, and teacher monitoring, was underscored, reinforcing Eric and Tobias' (2020) finding that proactive leadership enhances both teacher accountability and student readiness.

Finally, participants emphasised the role of parents and communities in sustaining improved outcomes, echoing Uwezo's (2014) conclusion that home support and parental involvement significantly influence student achievement. Collectively, these strategies underscore that sustainable improvement in Social Studies requires a multi-stakeholder approach, combining effective teaching, resource provision, leadership, and family engagement.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings, draws conclusions based on the study's objectives, and offers practical recommendations to enhance Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the trends in BECE results in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School between 2020 and 2024, with the aim of identifying performance patterns, the factors influencing these outcomes, and strategies for improvement. Both quantitative analysis of BECE results and interviews with teachers and the headteacher for qualitative data to provide valuable insights.

The quantitative findings revealed that students' performance in Social Studies fluctuated over the five-year period. While the school recorded above-average results in 2020 and 2021, performance declined sharply in 2022 and 2023, with lower pass rates and higher average grades. However, a remarkable improvement was observed in 2024, when the school attained its highest pass rate of 87.3% and an excellent average grade of 4.6. Gender analysis further showed that although both male and female students performed fairly consistently, female students generally outperformed their male counterparts across the years, with narrower gender gaps in recent years. These findings point to performance trends that are not linear but reflect the dynamic interplay of multiple factors at the teacher, school, student, and external levels.

The qualitative findings provided deeper explanations for these patterns. Teacher-related factors were found to be central, with subject expertise, pedagogical approaches, workload,

and limited instructional time shaping learning outcomes. Teachers explained that interactive methods such as debates and group work improved performance, while overreliance on lectures led to superficial understanding. School-level factors also played a crucial role. Inadequate resources such as textbooks, charts, and maps constrained effective teaching, while strong leadership and supervision, particularly in 2024, were linked to improved results through practices like mock examinations and regular feedback.

Student-related factors, including attitudes, engagement, and study habits, also influenced outcomes. Many students undervalued Social Studies compared to Mathematics and Science, contributing to poor preparation in some years. Weak study habits, last-minute preparation, and low engagement in 2022 and 2023 were contrasted with improved participation and stronger commitment in 2024. External and contextual factors, such as parental involvement, curriculum design, and examination pressure, further shaped performance. Students with supportive parents performed better, while the overloaded curriculum and exam anxiety were cited as major challenges in the years of decline.

Finally, teachers proposed strategies for sustaining improvement, including allocating more instructional time to Social Studies, diversifying teaching methods, providing adequate resources, strengthening leadership and supervision, and enhancing parental involvement. Collectively, the findings highlight that Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS is influenced by interconnected factors, and sustained improvement requires a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach.

5.2 Conclusions

The study set out to examine the trends in BECE Social Studies results at Afrancho Methodist JHS between 2020 and 2024, identify the factors contributing to performance fluctuations, and explore strategies for improvement. The findings allow for several important conclusions to be drawn.

First, the trend analysis revealed that performance in Social Studies has not been consistent over the five-year period. While the school maintained above-average performance in 2020 and 2021, results declined significantly in 2022 and 2023 before recovering strongly in 2024. This fluctuation indicates that student performance is influenced by a combination of internal and external dynamics rather than by any single factor.

Secondly, the study concludes that teacher-related factors, particularly subject mastery, teaching methodology, workload, and access to professional development, are central to shaping students' outcomes. Teachers who adopted interactive, learner-centered approaches enhanced students' engagement and performance, whereas overreliance on lecture-based methods limited critical thinking and application skills.

Next, school-level factors, including the availability of teaching and learning resources, leadership, and supervision, were found to directly influence performance. Effective leadership practices, such as mock examinations, regular monitoring, and feedback, fostered accountability and improvement, while lapses in these areas coincided with the years of lower performance.

Fourth, student-related factors also played a significant role. Negative attitudes toward Social Studies, poor study habits, and low classroom engagement hindered performance, particularly in 2022 and 2023. In contrast, motivated learners who developed effective study routines

performed consistently better, underscoring the importance of fostering positive attitudes and engagement among students.

Finally, external and contextual influences including parental involvement, curriculum design, and examination pressure were found to influence outcomes. Supportive parental involvement improved performance, while an overloaded syllabus and exam anxiety undermined students' confidence and readiness in some years.

Thus, the study demonstrates that performance in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS is influenced by a complex interplay of teacher, school, student, and external factors. Sustained improvement requires a holistic approach that strengthens teacher capacity, enhances school leadership, motivates students, and fosters parental and community involvement.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the key findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the performance of students in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist Junior High School:

1. Ghana Education Service (GES) should allocate additional instructional time for Social Studies within the basic school timetable. Given the broad and content-heavy nature of the syllabus, increased contact hours will allow teachers to cover the curriculum more thoroughly and provide remedial support for weaker learners.
2. The headteacher of Afrancho Methodist JHS should strengthen instructional supervision and accountability mechanisms. This includes regularly observing lessons, organising mock examinations, and providing timely feedback to both teachers and students, practices that were shown to contribute directly to the strong results in 2024.

3. Social Studies teachers at Afrancho Methodist JHS should adopt more interactive and learner-centered pedagogies, such as debates, group discussions, and the integration of ICT tools. These methods improve student engagement and critical thinking, reducing overreliance on rote memorization and lecture-based instruction.
4. Parents and Guardians should play a more active role in their children's learning. Monitoring homework, encouraging consistent study, and valuing Social Studies alongside other core subjects will foster stronger commitment among students and complement classroom efforts.
5. Ministry of Education, in collaboration with District Education Authority, should provide regular in-service training and workshops for Social Studies teachers. These sessions should focus on modern pedagogical techniques, effective assessment strategies, and curriculum interpretation, thereby enhancing teacher competence and motivation.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies could examine the role of parental socio-economic status and its effect on students' academic performance, since this may provide deeper insight into the external challenges identified in this study. Comparative studies across multiple schools or districts would also be useful to determine whether the patterns observed at Afrancho Methodist JHS reflect broader regional or national trends. Finally, studies that incorporate students' own voices through focus groups or surveys could provide a richer perspective on attitudes, study habits, and motivational factors that shape performance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

Dear Participant,

This interview guide is part of a study titled “*Trends Analysis of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) Results in Social Studies: A Case Study of Afrancho Methodist Junior High School.*” The purpose of this discussion is to explore your perspectives on the performance of students in Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). The information you provide will be used strictly for academic purposes and will be treated with confidentiality. There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your honest views. The interview will take about 30-45 minutes. With your permission, I will take notes and may record the discussion for accuracy. You are free to withdraw at any time.

Teacher Consent to Participate in Research
<p>I hereby give my consent to participate in the study titled. I understand that this study is being conducted solely for academic purposes and that my participation is voluntary. I am aware that I may withdraw at any time without facing any penalties or consequences. I have been assured that all information I provide will be kept strictly confidential and used only for the purposes of this study. I understand that no personal identifiers will be disclosed in any reports or publications. I have also been informed that there are no known risks or discomforts associated with my participation in this study. By signing or completing this questionnaire, I acknowledge that I have read and understood the purpose of the study and voluntarily agree to participate.</p>
<p>I consent to participate in this study: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Section A: Background Information

1. How long have you been teaching Social Studies at Afrancho Methodist JHS?
2. What levels (forms) have you taught, and for how many years?
3. Have you been directly involved in preparing students for BECE in Social Studies? If yes, in what capacity?

Section B: Trends in Students' Performance

1. Based on your experience, how would you describe the general trend of students' performance in Social Studies at BECE from 2020 to 2024?
2. Have you observed any patterns of improvement, decline, or fluctuation during these years? Could you please explain?
3. In your opinion, how does students' performance in Social Studies compare with their performance in other core subjects?

Section C: Factors Influencing Performance

1. What factors do you think have contributed to fluctuations in students' performance in Social Studies over the years?
2. How do teacher qualification, teaching methods, or instructional time affect students' outcomes?
3. In your experience, how do resources such as textbooks, teaching aids, and assessment tools influence students' preparation for BECE in Social Studies?
4. Do students' background factors (e.g., home environment, motivation, attitudes) play a role in their Social Studies performance? Please explain.
5. What role do leadership and supervision at the school play in influencing results in Social Studies?

Section D: Strategies for Improvement

1. What strategies have you personally used to support students in improving their performance in Social Studies?
2. In your opinion, what measures could the school adopt to improve performance in Social Studies at BECE?
3. What role should parents, the community, and educational authorities play in supporting better outcomes?

Section E: Concluding Thoughts

1. From your experience, what do you think is the most critical challenge facing Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS?
2. What recommendations would you give to enhance the teaching and learning of Social Studies for future BECE candidates?

Closing Remark:

Thank you very much for your time and valuable contributions. Your insights will help in understanding the trends and challenges in Social Studies performance at Afrancho Methodist JHS and in suggesting strategies for improvement.