

# Factors Responsible for Learners Inattention in Selected Secondary School in Bo City

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**Abstract:-** This study was carried out in Bo City, Southern Province, Republic of Sierra Leone. Bo City is a Cosmopolitan town found in the southern province of Sierra Leone. The city of Bo has an estimated population of about 175,000; and lies approximately 160 miles (250km) East, South-East of Freetown and about 44 miles to Kenema. Bo is the leading financial, educational center of southern Sierra Leone, (2015 Population Census).

The city of Bo is one of Sierra Leone's six municipalities and is also the primary home of Njala University, the second largest university in Sierra Leone after the Fourah Bay college. The study investigated Factors Responsible for Learners' Inattention in Selected Secondary Schools in Bo city. A total of one hundred teachers were randomly selected by an impartial ballot drawn from all the Secondary Schools in the study area. Of specific interest is learner's inattention and the extent to which teachers are knowledgeable of the causes, symptoms and prevention of inattention of their learners in class. Considering the low performance of secondary school pupils especially in Bo city, the study particularly selected teachers of Bo to investigate the topic under review. A total of five randomly selected secondary schools (Junior Secondary as well as Senior Secondary Schools) were randomly selected by an impartial ballot drawn from all the secondary schools in Bo. The selected schools were Haikal Academy, Methodist High School, Centenary United Secondary School, St. Andrews Secondary School and Queen of the Rosary Secondary School. A random sample of (20) teachers per school (10 JSS and 10 SSS) was carried out in each of the schools. This gave a total of 100 teachers in the selected secondary schools. Analysis of the data was employed using tables and percentages for each response category. Tables of responses were prepared and their content analyzed and discussed.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Inattention seems to be one of the major causes of slow learning in Sierra Leone. The government's new direction on free – quality education, teachers and parents follow various approaches to get pupils more exposed to knowledge and skills. Teachers recurrently add more hours to class time. Yet examinations and learners practical input remain generally

low. This research therefore holds that inattention could be fundamental to the situation and therefore sets out to discover the Factors Responsible for Learners' Inattention in class.

Imagine being a classroom teacher and having pupils who have difficulty concentrating in class. This could be very disturbing. When does the teacher begin to help these pupils? What accommodations can be made to help those pupils succeed in school? These are questions asked by many educators every day and the answers are never the same because the pupils are never the same. The most important thing is to consider the individual first and the disorder. In a classroom of diversity and multi levels of pupils' ability, how does the teacher best accommodate pupils with attention problems? Educators/teachers have the responsibility to help all learners fulfill their potentials. It is critical that parents and educators work together because consistency with every pupil is important.

However, there are marked differences in pupils' physical, mental, social and emotional characteristics. These are reflected in the rates at which children are brought up and some of these characteristics might be important causes for learners' inattention which sometimes lead to failure. It is important to note that inattention of learners is found among different groups of pupils and in different classrooms. Consequently, there are still several significant influences that could affect the attention ability of the child over which the parents and teachers would have little or no control. These factors which could be mainly contained in the school, the environment and inherent tradition of the child's immediate community; and coupled with those mental and physical qualities inherited from the parents' together account for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is the diagnosis given to those pupils who are easily distracted, have trouble staying in class and have a need to move around in the classroom. The disorder could be inattention due to hyperactivity or/and impulsivity. Teachers may be quick to identify a pupil with ADHD who misbehaves in the classroom or is overly active. There is much more to identifying a pupil with ADHD than just hyperactivity and impulsivity as ADHD includes a trace of inattention, Hyperactivity and /or impulsivity.

On the other hand, social and environmental factors such as childhood nurturance, poor child management, poverty, influence and culture could also be seen as lingering factors responsible for learners’ inattention.

➤ *Research Objectives*

- To investigate teachers’ knowledge of inattention.
- To examine teachers’ awareness of the causes of inattention.
- To examine teachers’ awareness of the symptoms of inattention.
- To asses teachers awareness of the prevention of inattention.
- To make suggestions and recommendation.

**II. METHODOLOGY**

This study was carried out in Bo City, Southern Province, Republic of Sierra Leone. Bo City is a Cosmopolitan town found in the southern province of Sierra Leone. The city of Bo has an estimated population of about 175,000; and lies approximately 160 miles (250km) East, South-East of Freetown and about 44 miles to Kenema. Bo is the leading financial, educational center of southern Sierra Leone, (2015 Population Census). A total of five secondary schools (Junior Secondary as well as Senior Secondary Schools) were randomly selected by an impartial ballot drawn from all the secondary schools in Bo. The selected schools were Haikal Academy, Methodist High School, Centenary United Secondary School, St. Andrews Secondary School and Queen of the Rosary Secondary School.

The general method used for this study was based on investigative questionnaire designed to explore the extent to which teachers are knowledgeable of the causes, symptoms and prevention of learner’s inattention in class. A random sample of (20) teachers per school (10 JSS and 10 SSS) was carried out in each of the schools. This gave a total of 100 teachers (respondents) in the selected secondary schools.

Though the questions were not exhaustive, yet they cover specific areas to highlight and obtain relevant information relating to the objective of the study. The questionnaire provided respondents with multiple choice checklist which they were to tick in the appropriate column.

The following instruments were used to collect relevant data for the study;

- Well-structured and explicit Likert – scale questionnaire.
- Personal interview with respondents.

Analysis of the data was employed using tables and percentages. Tables of responses were prepared and their content analyzed and discussed.

**III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

*A. Code and name of school*

Code	Name of School
C.U.M.S.S	Centenary United Methodist Secondary School
H.A.S	Haikal Academy School
M.H.S	Methodist High School
Q.R.S	Queen of Rosary School
U.C.C	St. Andrew’s Secondary School

Table 1

Table 1 reveals that five schools were targeted for the study. Four co-educational and one girl’s school (Q.R.S). All selected schools have both Junior and Senior Secondary Schools.

➤ *Qualification of Teachers*

Qualification	Sex		Frequency
	Male	Female	
T C	05	08	13
HTC	21	28	49
Bachelor’s Degree	17	12	29
Master’s Degree	05	02	07
Others (HND)	02	00	02
Total	50	50	100%

Table 2

The above table indicates that among 100 teachers interviewed, 50 were males and 50 were females. For TC: there were 5 males and 8 females, HTC-21 males and 28 females, Bachelor’s Degree-17 males, 12 females and 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree, 5 males, 2 females. Only 2 males had Higher National Diploma (HND).

➤ *Teaching Experience of Teachers according to sex*

Sex	Teaching experience	Frequency	Percentage
Male	1-5 years	17	17%
	6-10 years	16	16%
	11-15 years	12	12%
	16 and above	5	5%
Female	1-5 years	12	12%
	6-10 years	20	20%
	11-15 years	15	15%
	16 and above	3	3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3:- (SOURCE: Data collected 2018)

Table 3 reveals that, among the teaching experience of male participant, teachers who have taught for more than 15 years ranked the lowest (5%), 1 to 15 years (12%) respectively while 1 to 5 years (17%) ranked the highest and 6 to 10 being the highest teaching experience. Also the data indicates that 20% of females have taught for 6 to 10 years (20%) being the highest teaching experience and 10 to 15

years (15%) second highest, 1 to 15 years (12%) and the lowest 15 and above (3%) among the female participants.

➤ *Teachers knowledge of inattention*

Pupils may suffer from inattention because their parents suffer from inattention

School	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Frequency
C.U.M.S.S	6	5	0	4	5	20
H.A.S	6	10	1	1	2	20
M.H.S	2	12	2	3	1	20
Q.R.S	3	5	5	5	2	20
U.C.C	7	6	2	4	1	20
Total	24	38	10	17	11	100

Table 4:- (SOURCE: Data collected 2018)

Table 4 indicates that 62 teachers disagreed that pupils may suffer from inattention because their parents suffer from inattention, while 28 teachers agreed. Indicating that 62% of respondent teachers are not knowledgeable on the causes of inattention.

➤ *Teachers consciousness of the meaning of inattention*

Having difficulty to focus on the task at hand.

School	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Frequency
C.U.M.S.S	01	04	01	13	01	20
H.A.S	07	08	01	03	01	20
M.H.S	06	08	00	05	01	20
Q.R.S	01	06	01	10	02	20
U.C.C	01	01	01	15	02	20
Total	16	27	04	46	07	100

Table 5:- (SOURCE: Data collected 2018)

The above table revealed that, out of the 100 teachers interviewed, 53 agreed with the meaning of inattention, 4 undecided and 43 disagreed. This figure clearly indicates that a good number of teachers do not have enough knowledge on learners inattention. A situation like this may affect the educational performance of learners which has a greater tendency of affecting their educational attainment.

inattention, it could then be deduced that 34% of teachers could not help their learners with attention disability.

➤ *Cause of inattention*

As quoted by Archerbery, Rebecca (2008), Dupaul and Stoner claim it is important to note- “That there is no single cause of inattention due to combination of factors.

*B. Whether teachers are aware of the causes of inattention*

Unable to avoid distraction: Hyperactivity

Their research suggested that inattention may be connected to neurobiological factors and genetics influences. Also different chemical composition in the brain may cause the student to have inattention problems. Hence Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (A.D.H.D)

School	SD	D	UD	A	SA	FREQUENCY
C.U.M.S.S	00	05	00	13	2	20
H.A.S	04	05	01	09	01	20
M.H.S	01	04	01	14	00	20
Q.R.S	01	07	01	10	01	20
U.C.C	01	06	01	07	05	20
<b>05</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 6:- (SOURCE: Data collected 2018)

Table 6 indicates that 34 respondents disagreed that unable to avoid distraction can cause inattention while 62 agreed. With 34% of teachers disagreeing that ‘unable to avoid distraction due to hyperactivity’ is a not a cause of

Archerbery, Rebecca in her dissertation, further went on to say that genetics might also indicate that the student is more likely to get the disorder if the parents have the disorder themselves. She also stated that environment influences that cause the disorder are under investigation.

Mayes (2000) cited the following causes of inattention

- Being easily distracted, misses’ details, forget things easily and frequently switch from one activity to another.
- Having difficulty focusing on task at hand.

- Becoming bored with a task only after few minutes, unless the task is something enjoyable.
- Having difficulty in focusing attention on organizing and completing task or learning something new.
- Often loosing things needed to complete task or activities.
- Not seem to listen when spoken to.
- Having difficulty processing information as quickly and accurately as others
- Struggling to follow instructions
- Becoming easily confused.

Moreover, Mangrove and Marrow (2002) argued that activity that may last for more than thirty minutes in the classroom may be destined to loss the attention of the learners.

(Furthermore, Zapparoli, Erika’s research (2009) indicated that children with ADHD symptoms exhibit written expression difficulties related to spelling, compositional fluency (i.e. they tend to write short stories under time constraints) and compositional accuracy (produce more errors in punctuation, grammar and sentence construction in their stories).

Retrieving from the internet, it was opined that inattention is a negative condition for pupils. This negativity affects many aspects of the learning including home, school, work and interpersonal relationships. Factors such as family chaos or troubles at home, anxiety and depression contribute to this negativity.

Family chaos or trouble at home, this could be a lingering factor that may raise levels of emotional distress to such a degree that a child’s ability to deal with school is compromised. Pumfree (2000) stated that the child’s ability to learn can be influenced by the situation or surroundings.

In relation to Humphrey’s statement, Hall and Haws (2000) poised that “if a child is depressed, his or her academic performance would decline”. They emphasized that strong emotional concerns may lessen a child’s resources for learning and/ or dealing with challenging school experiences. Thus the pupils become inattentive in class and disinterested in school work.

➤ *Anxiety*

Margalit and Zak (2004) found that children with attention disabilities have higher levels of anxiety than do their peers without attention disabilities. They further specified that children with attention disabilities feel more often that events beyond their control were happening. Also Margalit and Raviv, (2004) stated that increased level of anxiety are also reflected in more frequent stomach complaints by students with attention disabilities. This may have a great influence on learners’ abilities that may result to learning disability.

➤ *Depression*

The internet revealed that researchers have consistently linked depression to children with learning disabilities. However, the mechanism by which emotional issues arise are not clear. Chandler (2004) suggested that some emotional adjustment disorder result from “attempt to cope with a difficult learning process the resultant failure, frustration and feeling of incompetence that those attempts engender”. Quoting further, Chandler said “for some learners, school achievement has become equated with self-competence, and the loss of competence has led to the feelings of inadequacy, depression, withdrawal and uncaring attitude”.

Also, Frisad et al (2000) suggested that the additional difficulties experienced by depressed children with learning disabilities may be due to inattention in class.

C. *Teachers consciousness of the symptoms of inattention*

Pupils having difficulties in writing long essays as a symptom of inattention

School	SD	D	UD	A	SA	FREQUENCY
C.U.M.S.S	02	03	01	13	1	20
H.A.S	01	08	01	09	01	20
M.H.S	06	05	00	08	01	20
Q.R.S	01	02	02	13	02	20
U.C.C	01	02	02	10	05	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 7:- (SOURCE: Data collected 2018)

Table 7 indicates that 31 respondents disagreed with pupils having difficulties writing long essays as a symptom of inattention, for which 63 agreed and 6 undecided. If 31% of teachers do not know that ‘pupils having difficulties in writing long essays’ is a symptom of inattention, then this may have significant implications on learner’s educational attainment.

➤ *Symptoms of Inattention*

Learners who exhibit inattention due to hyperactivity disorder may show symptoms by excessively taking and fidgeting in class, nervousness and constantly moving around in class. These signs could be noticeable when the students is asked to engage in quiet play and cannot seem to be quiet or still. The student might seem to be constantly on the go all time. He or she may have excess energy that never burns off. The student might have difficulty staying sited and most consistently reminded to sit down. (Waltz, 2000).

Other symptoms of inattention could be due to impulsivity. These symptoms include randomly busting out with answers in the classroom, interrupting, having difficulties waiting for their turn or intruding. An example of impulsivity may include blurt out the answer before the

teacher has finished asking the question. Also Attention Deficit Impulsivity Symptoms may be shown when the student is talking to another student and the student with the disorder runs up to interrupt the conversation. Waiting for their turn or being patient can be difficult.

*D. Teachers consciousness of the prevention of learners' inattention*

School	SD	D	UD	A	SA	FREQUENCY
C.U.M.S.S	02	3	1	10	04	20
H.A.S	00	1	1	13	05	20
M.H.S	03	1	0	10	06	20
Q.R.S	01	7	2	09	01	20
U.C.C	01	2	01	15	01	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 8:- (SOURCE: Data collected 2018)

Table 8 indicates that 21 respondents disagreed that pupils take responsibility for their own inattention in class while 74 agreed.

➤ *Prevention of Inattention*

Prevention of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity or Attention Deficit Disorder includes becoming more familiar with ADHS or ADD and how the disorder affects the student in school. (Achtenbery, Rebecca 2008). In her research she recommended that the teacher, parents, counselors and school administrators should all be part of a team to accommodate and support the student, bringing out the following:

- “Providing an advance organizer each day for the student may help the student stay organizing. Before the day begins, the child can review the plans for the day. This should be very brief and include the necessary materials needed throughout the day”.
- That the teacher should review previous lessons. “Students who have ADHD often have problems organizing their thoughts”.
- And that going over what happened yesterday in class will be very helpful for the students as the goal is to help the student see how all these lessons are related and why it is important to know these facts (Pierangelo&Guiliani, 2008).
- It is important for school counselors to consult with the teachers to find out how things are going if the accommodation have to be changed or if they are working (Waller 2006)
- Also Mangrove and Marrow (2002) suggested the following tips to increase student attendance. Thus the teacher does:
  - ✓ Evaluation of the environment to increase student behavior in class.
  - ✓ Establishment of routines and structure, giving clear directions and instructions and providing immediate feedback.

- ✓ Changing personal presentation styles, involvement of students in demonstrations, getting organized, helping students with their organizational skills, building positive, love, acceptance, consistency, fairness, and appropriate expectations can help prevent the disorder.

In addition to the above, Hallahn 1999 argued that teachers should train pupils on watching themselves to determine the kind of behavior which should be improved in order to attract their student. Hallaham stated that the teachers also have to determine the way of reinforcing attention and behavior like using voice variations.

Retrieving from the internet, Bryant and Bryan (2000) maintained that the teacher should consider three factors to get pupils' attention:

- ✓ The difficulty to the skill
- ✓ Status of the child
- ✓ The ability to change and develop the teaching process that suits the level and interest of the child.

➤ *The role of theorists in education*

Building upon the educational philosophies presented by theorists such as Maslow, Piaget, Knowles and many others, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the factors associated with effective learning and academic successes. They quoted thus “providing a sense of community with a learning environment increases the opportunity to create a network of student support; in turn creating positive student perceptions of learning”. Maslow et al stated that, much of what ails the educational process today is perceived by the student's lack of motivation to learn.

Bainbridge and Shulman (1995) stated that the ability to teach well is typically not innate (given by birth) ability. Teaching is a skill that is learned with the determination to lead by example. That it also involves supplying tools students need to succeed in their area of professional life.

*E. Teachers need special training to help prevent inattention of pupils.*

School	SD	D	UD	A	SA	FREQUENCY
C.U.M.S.S	05	08	00	07	00	20
H.A.S	03	10	01	06	00	20
M.H.S	00	02	07	10	01	20
Q.R.S	03	02	02	13	00	20
U.C.C	02	07	04	05	02	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 9:- (SOURCE: Data collected 2018)

Table 9 indicates that 42 respondents disagreed that teachers need special training to help prevent inattention of pupils while 45 agreed.

*F. Education authorities to pay attention to learners' inattention*

School	SD	D	UD	A	SA	FREQUENCY
C.U.M.S.S	01	02	05	08	04	20
H.A.S	03	01	02	10	04	20
M.H.S	00	03	01	12	04	20
Q.R.S	01	02	01	10	06	20
U.C.C	02	00	01	11	06	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	07	08	10	51	24	100

Table 10

Table 10 indicates that 15 respondents disagreed on education authorities to pay more attention to learners' attention as a way of preventing inattention while 75 agreed. Indicating that those teachers are ready to solve the problem of learner's inattention in class.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Based on the result of the research, it is revealed that the highest teaching experience of male teachers is between the range of 1-05 years and 6-10 years for female sex. This clearly indicates that most of the teachers have a wealth of experience in teaching but female teachers have more teaching experience than male teachers.

Male teachers who had the highest teaching qualification (2<sup>nd</sup> Degree) outnumbered the female teachers who had second degree. However, female teachers ranked highest in the Teachers Certificate than the male teachers. Only two male teachers had a National Diploma.

Teachers' knowledge of inattention is only 28%. This indicates that most of the teachers are not knowledgeable about pupils' inattention in class. Teachers' consciousness of the meaning of inattention revealed that 25.5% are conscious of the meaning of inattention, and 21.5% of the respondents are not conscious of the meaning of inattention. This shows that some teachers are conscious of pupils who have learning difficulty to focus on the task at hand. Indicating that they are not conscious of pupils who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Teachers' awareness of the causes of inattention indicates that most of the respondents 62% are aware of the causes of inattention among pupils. This indicates that teachers might have the concern of pupils' inattention. However 59% of the respondents disagreed that becoming easily confused on a task does not cause inattention. This implies that teachers are not aware of this aspect of the causes of inattention. Teachers' consciousness of the symptom of inattention reveals that most of the teachers 50% are conscious of inattention, indicating that most teachers can easily identify the symptoms of inattention.

Teachers' consciousness of the prevention of the inattention revealed that respondents (50-60%) have knowledge of the prevention of inattention among pupils. This shows that teachers may have the capacity to minimize inattention among pupils, but need special training.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that:

- Both male and female respondents have long teaching experience.
- Teachers have inadequate knowledge on the meaning of inattention of learners.
- Some teachers are not convinced that pupils may suffer from inattention because their parents suffer from inattention.
- Pupils' inattention has negative effect on their tasks at hand or learning process.
- School professionals, counselors, teachers and pupils have a role to play on learners' attention in class.

#### RECOMMENDATION

The study recommended that:

- Classroom setting must be conducive enough to enhance effective teaching and learning.
- School administrators must ensure that play grounds are far away from the classroom in order to prevent learners from being attracted.
- School counselors need to monitor the academic performance of students. If the student with ADHD is having trouble in the academic field, then the school counselor should look at the student's schedule to determine appropriate help if needed, including schedule changes and consulting with the teacher.
- It is important for school counselors to consult with the teacher to find out how things are
- Working with pupils who have attention disorder.
- Teachers should provide opportunities for children with learning disabilities to be involved in the learning process and demonstrate competencies that are not compromised by their learning disabilities.
- Teachers must increase the student's adaptive skills by building social skills (e.g. Interpreting ambiguous social situations). Improved social skills may provide the learner a buffer against emotional issues.
- Pupils take responsibility of their own attention in class.
- Class periods should not exceed 30 minutes.
- Pupils' tasks should be specific in order to increase the focus on the task at hand.
- Teachers should guide pupils in the teaching/learning process, and also arouse pupil's interest for every lesson or task at hand.
- There should be a functioning guidance and counseling department in every school.

- Education authorities pay more attention to teachers and pupils to recognize and address the causes and symptoms of inattention among pupils.
- Special training be conducted for teachers on how to recognize and prevent inattention among pupils.
- It could be worthwhile to continue research regarding Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder so as to determine the impact of biological and environmental influences on the learner.
- If Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is preventable, further research what preventive measures could be implemented. More longitudinal research studies need to be done to explore the impact of ADHD on learners.

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