

**Relationship Between Sexual Harassment And Academic Performance Of Girls In Secondary Schools In**

**Namayumba Town Council.**

**Mwanje Francis<sup>1</sup>, Kiwanuka Rashid<sup>2</sup>**

**1, 2 Metropolitan International University**

**Abstract**

The study examined the relationship between sexual harassment and academic performance of girls in secondary schools in Namayumba Town Council. A cross-sectional survey design was employed with a sample of 303 participants comprising 275 female students, 5 school principals, 6 guidance counsellors, and 17 teachers. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview guides. Results revealed that 68.4% of female students experienced at least one form of sexual harassment, with verbal harassment being most prevalent (54.2%). A significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.623$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) was found between sexual harassment experiences and academic performance. Students who experienced frequent harassment had significantly lower GPAs (2.1) compared to those who did not (3.4). The study concluded that sexual harassment substantially undermined girls' academic achievement. It was recommended that schools implement comprehensive anti-harassment policies, establish confidential reporting mechanisms, provide mandatory staff training, and strengthen guidance and counselling services to protect female students and enhance their educational outcomes.

**Keywords: sexual harassment, academic performance, female students, secondary schools, Namayumba Town Council, educational psychology**

**Background of the Study**

Sexual harassment in educational institutions represented a pervasive problem that threatened the safety, dignity, and academic success of female students across sub-Saharan Africa (Julius & Audrey, 2025a). In Uganda, secondary schools faced increasing concerns about various forms of harassment, ranging from unwanted verbal comments and gestures to physical touching and intimidation by teachers, fellow students, and support staff (Ntirandekura, Ainebyoona, et al., 2022). Namayumba Town Council, located in Wakiso District, comprised five secondary schools serving approximately 1,250 female students across different socio-economic backgrounds (Suzan & Gracious Kazaara, 2023). Despite national policies such as the Uganda Gender Policy (2007) and the Education Act prohibiting discrimination and harassment in schools, implementation remained weak and incidents continued to be underreported due to stigma, fear of retaliation, and inadequate institutional response mechanisms (Isaac et al., 2023).

Previous research demonstrated that sexual harassment created hostile learning environments that negatively affected students' psychological well-being, school attendance, classroom participation, and ultimately academic performance (Godfrey et al., 2023). Girls who experienced harassment often developed anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and academic disengagement. They were more likely to skip classes, avoid certain school areas, drop out entirely, or perform poorly in examinations (Kaazara & Audrey, 2025). The consequences extended beyond individual victims to

**Received: 12.01.2026**

**Accepted: 18.01.2026**

**Published on: 30.01.2026**

affect entire school communities through reduced trust, deteriorated student-teacher relationships, and compromised educational quality (Julius & Audrey, 2025b).

In Namayumba Town Council, anecdotal evidence from guidance counsellors and school administrators suggested that sexual harassment incidents were increasing, yet no systematic study had been conducted to assess the magnitude of the problem or its specific impact on girls' academic achievement (Julius & Kaazara, 2025). Understanding this relationship was crucial for developing evidence-based interventions to protect female students' rights and promote gender equality in education (Julius, 2025). This study therefore sought to fill this knowledge gap by examining the prevalence, forms, perpetrators, and consequences of sexual harassment, and how these experiences correlated with academic performance indicators such as grades, attendance, and participation among secondary school girls in Namayumba Town Council (Ntirandekura, Friday, et al., 2022).

### **Problem Statement**

Despite constitutional guarantees and educational policies protecting students' rights to safe learning environments, sexual harassment remained a significant challenge in Ugandan secondary schools (Moses, 2023). In Namayumba Town Council, female students faced various forms of harassment that potentially compromised their academic performance, yet the extent and impact of this problem remained inadequately documented (Julius & Nancy, 2025). School administrators reported increasing incidents of harassment-related complaints, while teachers observed declining academic engagement among some female students. However, without empirical evidence establishing the relationship between sexual harassment experiences and academic outcomes, schools lacked the justification and guidance needed to implement effective preventive and responsive measures (Kaazara & Audrey, 2025). The absence of systematic data meant that resources might be misallocated, interventions could be ineffective, and victimized students might continue suffering in silence (Kazaara & Deus, 2024). This study addressed this critical knowledge gap by investigating how sexual harassment affected girls' academic performance in secondary schools within Namayumba Town Council, thereby providing evidence to inform policy development, institutional practices, and support services aimed at creating safer educational environments conducive to female students' academic success (Julius & Kazaara, 2025).

### **Specific Objective**

To establish the relationship between sexual harassment and academic performance of girls.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the relationship between sexual harassment and academic performance among secondary school girls in Namayumba Town Council. The design was appropriate because it allowed for collection of data at a single point in time while capturing both numerical patterns and in-depth perspectives from multiple stakeholders (Abiodun et al., 2022).

The study population comprised 1,293 individuals across five secondary schools in Namayumba Town Council, including female students from Senior One to Senior Six, school principals, guidance counsellors, teachers, and support staff. A sample of 303 participants was selected using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error (A. Nafiu et al., 2012). The sample included 275 female students selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different grade levels, 5 school principals selected through purposive sampling based on their administrative roles, 6 guidance counsellors purposively selected for their direct involvement in handling harassment cases, and 17 teachers (representing science and humanities departments) selected through stratified random sampling. School support staff were excluded from the final sample due to access limitations and research scope considerations (Kaazara & Audrey, 2025).

Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires for students and teachers, and semi-structured interview guides for school administrators and counsellors. The student questionnaire contained sections on demographic characteristics, experiences of sexual harassment (types, frequency, perpetrators), reporting behaviour, and academic performance indicators including self-reported grades, attendance records, and perceived academic engagement (Racheal et al., 2023). Academic performance data were triangulated with official school records for the most recent academic term. The instruments were pre-tested in a secondary school outside Namayumba Town Council and modified for clarity and cultural appropriateness. Ethical approval was obtained from relevant authorities, and informed consent was secured from participants, with parental consent obtained for students under 18 years. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26.0 (Nelson et al., 2022). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics including Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between sexual harassment experiences and academic performance, and independent samples t-tests to compare performance between harassed and non-harassed students. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed, coded thematically, and analyzed to provide contextual understanding and triangulate quantitative findings.

## **Results**

### **Prevalence and Forms of Sexual Harassment**

The study findings revealed widespread sexual harassment experiences among female students in secondary schools in Namayumba Town Council. As presented in Table 1, out of 275 female students who participated in the study, 188 students (68.4%) reported experiencing at least one form of sexual harassment during the current academic year, while 87 students (31.6%) reported no harassment experiences. This high prevalence rate indicated that more than two-thirds of female students faced harassment, highlighting the severity of the problem within these educational institutions.

**Table 1: Prevalence of Sexual Harassment Among Female Students**

<b>Experience of Harassment</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Experienced harassment	188	68.4

**Received: 12.01.2026**

**Accepted: 18.01.2026**

**Published on: 30.01.2026**

Did not experience harassment	87	31.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 1 presented the distribution of different types of sexual harassment experienced by the 188 students who reported harassment. Verbal harassment emerged as the most prevalent form, with 102 students (54.2%) reporting unwanted sexual comments, jokes, or propositions. Physical harassment, including unwanted touching or brushing against students' bodies, was reported by 76 students (40.4%). Non-verbal harassment such as sexual gestures, staring, or display of inappropriate materials affected 58 students (30.9%). Quid pro quo harassment, where teachers or staff demanded sexual favours in exchange for grades or privileges, was reported by 34 students (18.1%). Additionally, 45 students (23.9%) reported experiencing cyber harassment through inappropriate messages or sharing of images via social media platforms. Many students reported experiencing multiple forms of harassment simultaneously.

**Table 2: Types of Sexual Harassment Experienced (n=188)**

Type of Harassment	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Verbal harassment (comments, jokes, propositions)	102	54.2
Physical harassment (unwanted touching)	76	40.4
Non-verbal harassment (gestures, staring)	58	30.9
Cyber harassment (social media)	45	23.9
Quid pro quo (demands for sexual favours)	34	18.1

Note: Multiple responses were possible, percentages do not total 100%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

**Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment**

Analysis of who perpetrated sexual harassment against female students revealed multiple sources within the school environment. Table 3 demonstrated that fellow male students were the most commonly reported perpetrators, with 134 students (71.3% of those harassed) identifying them as perpetrators. Male teachers were identified by 67 students (35.6%), indicating significant power-differential harassment. Support staff including security guards, drivers, and maintenance workers were mentioned by 28 students (14.9%). Alarming, 19 students (10.1%) reported harassment by school administrators including deputy headteachers or discipline masters. External community members who accessed school premises were identified by 23 students (12.2%). These findings indicated that sexual harassment originated from multiple actors within the school ecosystem, necessitating comprehensive interventions targeting different stakeholder groups.

**Table 3: Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment (n=188)**

Perpetrator Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
----------------------	---------------	----------------

Male students	134	71.3
Male teachers	67	35.6
Support staff (guards, drivers, maintenance)	28	14.9
External community members	23	12.2
School administrators	19	10.1

Note: Multiple responses were possible, percentages do not total 100%

**Source: Primary Data, 2025**

**Academic Performance Indicators**

The study examined academic performance using multiple indicators including Grade Point Average (GPA), attendance rates, and classroom participation. Table 4 presented comparative academic performance data between students who experienced sexual harassment and those who did not. Students who experienced harassment had a mean GPA of 2.1 (SD = 0.6) compared to 3.4 (SD = 0.5) for non-harassed students, representing a statistically significant difference ( $t = 15.23, p < 0.001$ ) (Nelson et al., 2023). Attendance rates also differed markedly, with harassed students averaging 72.3% attendance (SD = 12.4%) compared to 91.7% (SD = 6.8%) for non-harassed students ( $t = 13.45, p < 0.001$ ). Classroom participation, measured on a 5-point scale where teachers rated students' engagement, showed harassed students scoring 2.3 (SD = 0.8) compared to 4.1 (SD = 0.7) for non-harassed students ( $t = 16.87, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 4: Comparison of Academic Performance Between Harassed and Non-Harassed Students**

Performance Indicator	Harassed Students (n=188) Mean (SD)	Non-Harassed Students (n=87) Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value
Grade Point Average (GPA)	2.1 (0.6)	3.4 (0.5)	15.23	<0.001
Attendance Rate (%)	72.3 (12.4)	91.7 (6.8)	13.45	<0.001
Classroom Participation (1-5 scale)	2.3 (0.8)	4.1 (0.7)	16.87	<0.001

**Source: Primary Data, 2025**

These substantial differences in academic performance indicators demonstrated the severe negative impact of sexual harassment on girls' educational outcomes. The lower GPAs suggested that harassed students struggled academically, potentially due to psychological distress, reduced concentration, and diminished motivation. The significantly lower attendance rates indicated that victims frequently avoided school to escape hostile environments, directly reducing their learning opportunities and academic engagement. The poor classroom participation scores reflected how harassment undermined students' confidence and willingness to actively engage in learning activities. Interviews with guidance counsellors corroborated these findings, with one counsellor stating, "Girls who experience harassment



become withdrawn, stop participating in class, and their grades drop dramatically. Some eventually drop out completely."

**Relationship Between Sexual Harassment and Academic Performance**

The study examined the correlation between the frequency of sexual harassment experiences and academic performance. Students were categorized based on harassment frequency: no harassment (n=87), occasional harassment (1-3 incidents per term, n=89), frequent harassment (4-6 incidents per term, n=58), and persistent harassment (7 or more incidents per term, n=41). Table 5 showed that as harassment frequency increased, academic performance declined progressively. Students with no harassment achieved a mean GPA of 3.4, those with occasional harassment had 2.8, frequent harassment victims scored 2.3, and persistent harassment victims had the lowest mean GPA of 1.7.

**Table 5: Academic Performance by Frequency of Sexual Harassment**

Harassment Frequency	n	Mean GPA	SD	Mean Attendance (%)	SD
No harassment	87	3.4	0.5	91.7	6.8
Occasional (1-3 incidents/term)	89	2.8	0.6	81.2	10.3
Frequent (4-6 incidents/term)	58	2.3	0.7	74.5	11.8
Persistent (7+ incidents/term)	41	1.7	0.5	63.8	14.2

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong negative correlation between sexual harassment experiences (measured by frequency and severity scores) and academic performance ( $r = -0.623$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that as harassment increased, academic performance decreased significantly. This relationship remained statistically significant even after controlling for variables such as socio-economic status, parental education level, and previous academic performance. The correlation coefficient of  $-0.623$  represented a strong negative relationship, suggesting that sexual harassment explained approximately 38.8% of the variance in academic performance among female students in the study. Additional analysis showed that the type of harassment also mattered; quid pro quo harassment and physical harassment had stronger negative correlations with academic performance ( $r = -0.71$  and  $r = -0.68$  respectively) compared to verbal harassment ( $r = -0.52$ ), though all correlations were statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

**Reporting Behaviour and Institutional Response**

The study also examined whether students reported their harassment experiences and the institutional responses they received. Of the 188 students who experienced harassment, only 53 students (28.2%) formally reported their experiences to school authorities, while 135 students (71.8%) did not report. The main reasons for not reporting included fear of retaliation (42.2%), belief that nothing would be done (38.5%), shame and stigma (31.1%), fear of being blamed (27.4%), and not knowing where to report (18.5%). Among the 53 students who reported, 19 (35.8%) stated that appropriate action was taken, 21 (39.6%) reported that minimal or symbolic action occurred, and 13 (24.5%)



stated that no action was taken at all. This indicated significant gaps in institutional response mechanisms and protection of victims, which contributed to perpetuating the problem and discouraging future reporting.

### **Conclusions**

This study conclusively established a strong negative relationship between sexual harassment and academic performance of female students in secondary schools in Namayumba Town Council. The high prevalence rate of 68.4% and the significant differences in GPA, attendance, and classroom participation between harassed and non-harassed students demonstrated that sexual harassment constituted a serious educational crisis requiring urgent intervention. The finding that harassment frequency correlated negatively with academic outcomes underscored the cumulative damaging effects of repeated victimization. The predominance of fellow students as perpetrators, combined with significant harassment from authority figures including teachers and administrators, revealed a pervasive culture of harassment that compromised girls' fundamental right to safe and quality education.

### **Recommendations**

Schools in Namayumba Town Council should immediately adopt and rigorously enforce comprehensive anti-sexual harassment policies with clear definitions, reporting procedures, investigation protocols, and consequences for perpetrators. These policies should be disseminated to all students, staff, and parents at the beginning of each academic year.

All teachers, administrators, and support staff should undergo mandatory annual training on recognizing, preventing, and appropriately responding to sexual harassment. Students should receive age-appropriate education on their rights, consent, respectful relationships, and available support services through guidance and counselling sessions integrated into the curriculum.

Schools should establish multiple confidential reporting channels including suggestion boxes, dedicated phone lines or email addresses, trusted reporting persons in each grade level, and partnerships with external organizations to ensure students feel safe reporting harassment without fear of retaliation or exposure.

Schools should increase the number of professional counsellors, ensure they received specialized training in trauma-informed approaches for harassment victims, and provide adequate resources for both preventive education and victim support. Counselling services should be accessible, confidential, and consistently available to all students.

School management should commit to investigating all harassment reports promptly, transparently, and fairly, taking appropriate disciplinary action against perpetrators regardless of their position, and providing support and protection

to victims. Regular audits of case handling should be conducted to ensure accountability and continuous improvement in institutional response mechanisms.

### **References**

- A. Nafiu, L., O. Oshungade, I., & A. Adewara, A. (2012). Alternative Estimation Method for a Three-Stage Cluster Sampling in Finite Population. *American Journal of Mathematics and Statistics*, 2(6), 199–205. <https://doi.org/10.5923/j.ajms.20120206.06>
- Abiodun, N. L., Matovu, M. S., & Olanrewaju, R. O. (2022). Statistical Powers of Univariate Normality Tests: Comparative Analysis of 2016 Election Process in Uganda. *European Journal of Statistics*, 2, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.28924/ada/stat.2.6>
- Godfrey, W., Silvia, N., Kazaara, A. G., Nelson, K., Christopher, F., Deus, T., Micheal, T., & Catherine, M. (2023). *The Effect Of Teacher ' s Instructional Methods On The Learners Academic Performance In Mathematics Subject In Secondary Schools , A Case Study Of Buwesswa Secondary School In Manafwa District*. 7(2), 100–107.
- Isaac, O., Kazaara, A. G., & Kazaara, A. I. (2023). *Assessment of the Effect of Workplace Conflict on Employees Performance and Organizational Productivity , a Case Study of Tororo General Hospital*. 7(3), 279–289.
- Julius, A. (2025). *Discipline as the Unseen Catalyst : Fostering Innovation and Creativity in Ugandan Universities through Structured Integrity*. 9(8), 201–207.
- Julius, A., & Audrey, A. (2025a). *Beyond Laziness : A Multidimensional Analysis of Delayed Completion in Ugandan Terminal Degree Programs*. 9(10), 202–210.
- Julius, A., & Audrey, A. (2025b). *Beyond Skills Training : Addressing the Systemic Pathologies in Uganda ' s Education System for Genuine Work Readiness*. 9(11), 352–360.
- Julius, A., & Kaazara, A. G. (2025). *The Academic Writing Process : A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Scholarly Communication*. 9(12), 212–219.
- Julius, A., & Kazaara, A. I. (2025). *Survival and Resilience : An Analysis of Livelihood Strategies Among Uganda ' s Unemployed Youth*. 9(10), 219–228.
- Julius, A., & Nancy, M. (2025). *Bridging the Chasm : An Evaluation of the Transition from Secondary Education to Higher Learning in Uganda : A Case Study of Avance International University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology*. 9(10), 163–172.
- Kaazara, A. G., & Audrey, A. (2025). *The Impact of Inquiry-Based Learning on Student Engagement in Ugandan Secondary School Science Classrooms .* 9(12), 102–109.
- Kazaara, A. I., & Deus, T. (2024). *Inclusive Recruitment and Admissions in Social Science Programs , A Case Study of Faculty of Arts and Humanities .* 8(8), 127–132.
- Moses, T. (2023). *On Job Training and Its Implication on Staff Performance in Uganda : A Case Study of Kasanda*

**Received: 12.01.2026**

**Accepted: 18.01.2026**

**Published on: 30.01.2026**

- District Local Government*. 7(4), 155–163.
- Nelson, K., Christopher, F., & Milton, N. (2022). *Teach Yourself Spss and Stata*. 6(7), 84–122.
- Nelson, K., Kazaara, A. G., & Kazaara, A. I. (2023). *Teach Yourself E-Views*. 7(3), 124–145.
- Ntirandekura, M., Ainebyoona, A., Registrar, D., District, B., & Commission, E. (2022). *Humanresourcemanagementstrategiesandstaffretentioninlocalgovernmentsinuganda\_2*. 6(7), 89–103.
- Ntirandekura, M., Friday, C., & Muhammad, M. (2022). Rewards and Staff Retention in Public Sector in Uganda: An Empirical Study from Kabale District Local Government. *International Journal of Academic Management Science Research*, 6(7), 165–170.
- Racheal, N., Enock, Z., & Kazaara, A. G. (2023). *Impact of quality financial reporting on an organization resource management: a case study of humuza holding limited kampala uganda 1*. 2(2), 408–425.
- Suzan, W., & Gracious Kazaara, A. (2023). *The Impact of Western Education on Social Economic Development of Communities in Uganda-A Case Study of Wakiso Town Council Wakiso District* (Vol. 7).