

Students' Attitudes And Performance In Kiswahili: A Case Of Bukokho Seed Secondary School In Namisindwa District

Nasipond Filistus¹, Akandwanaho Fagil²

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract

The study examined students' attitudes and performance in Kiswahili at Bukokho Seed Secondary School in Namisindwa District, Uganda. The study was guided by three specific objectives: to assess the nature of students' attitudes toward Kiswahili language learning, to examine the relationship between student attitudes and academic performance in Kiswahili, and to identify the factors that influenced students' attitudes toward the Kiswahili subject. A descriptive survey research design was employed, and data were collected from 120 respondents comprising students, Kiswahili teachers, and school administrators. Questionnaires, interview guides, and document analysis were used as data collection instruments. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that the majority of students held negative attitudes toward Kiswahili, which was associated with poor academic performance in the subject. Factors such as lack of qualified Kiswahili teachers, inadequate instructional materials, limited exposure to the Kiswahili language environment, and perceived irrelevance of Kiswahili in daily community life significantly influenced students' negative attitudes. The study concluded that attitudinal factors played a critical role in shaping Kiswahili performance outcomes at Bukokho Seed Secondary School. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education and Sports strengthen the deployment of qualified Kiswahili teachers in rural schools, promote extracurricular activities that create a Kiswahili language environment, and sensitize communities about the importance of Kiswahili in national and regional development.

Keywords: Students' Attitudes, Kiswahili Performance, Language Learning, Secondary School, Namisindwa District, Uganda

Background of the study

Language learning attitudes had long been recognized as one of the most powerful predictors of second language acquisition success across the globe (A. I. Kazaara, 2025). Scholars in applied linguistics and language education had consistently argued that the affective dimension of language learning, encompassing attitudes, motivation, and anxiety, played an equally important, if not more important, role in determining academic performance as did cognitive ability (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Dörnyei, 2001). In the African educational context, where students were typically exposed to multiple languages simultaneously, the interplay between attitudes toward specific languages and performance in those languages had attracted considerable scholarly attention (Julius, 2024a). Research conducted across sub-Saharan African nations revealed that students who harbored positive attitudes toward a target language

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demonstrated significantly higher levels of engagement, persistence, and ultimately better academic outcomes in that language (Muthanna & Miao, 2015).

In Uganda, Kiswahili was introduced as a compulsory subject in the lower secondary school curriculum following the implementation of the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) reforms. The Ministry of Education and Sports, through the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), had developed a comprehensive Kiswahili curriculum intended to promote linguistic diversity, foster East African regional integration, and equip learners with a widely spoken African language (Julius & Nancy, 2025a). Despite these curricular intentions, reports from the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) consistently indicated that student performance in Kiswahili remained below average at the national level, raising questions about the attitudinal orientation of students toward the subject (UNEB, 2019; 2021). Educators and language planners had increasingly pointed to attitudinal factors as among the most significant barriers to Kiswahili language acquisition in Ugandan schools (Julius & Desire, 2025).

Namisindwa District, located in the Eastern Region of Uganda, was one of the administrative units in which Kiswahili had been introduced in schools as part of the national education reforms (Suzan & Gracious Kazaara, 2023). The district was predominantly inhabited by the Bamasaba people, whose primary linguistic identity was rooted in Lumasaba, the local Bantu language. In this multilingual context, students encountered Kiswahili as an additional language that competed for linguistic space with Lumasaba, English, and to a lesser extent, other regional languages. Bukokho Seed Secondary School, established as a government-aided school intended to provide quality education to students from rural communities in Namisindwa, was among the schools in the district where Kiswahili was offered as an examinable subject (Julius & Nancy, 2025b). Preliminary observations from the school indicated that student performance in Kiswahili had been consistently poor, with pass rates hovering around 32% over the previous three academic years, prompting the current investigation into the attitudinal dimensions of this underperformance (Winny et al., 2023).

The concept of attitude in language learning had been theorized from several disciplinary perspectives. Social psychologists such as Gardner (1985) had defined attitude as a learned evaluative predisposition toward a language and its speakers, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. From an educational psychology standpoint, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) had argued in their Theory of Reasoned Action that attitudes were among the primary determinants of behavioral intention, meaning that students who developed positive evaluations of Kiswahili were more likely to invest cognitive and emotional resources into its study (Julius & Nancy, 2026a). Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory further emphasized the role of social and cultural contexts in shaping learners' linguistic identities and their attitudes toward particular languages, suggesting that community-level language attitudes could permeate school environments and affect individual student motivation (A. I. Kazaara & Nancy, 2026).

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Research conducted in East African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda, where Kiswahili held official language status, had demonstrated that institutional support, teacher competence, community language use, and instructional materials were all mediating variables between student attitudes and language performance (Mwansoko, 2004; Ogechi, 2012). However, in Uganda, where Kiswahili had historically been associated with particular social and political connotations dating back to the colonial and post-independence eras, the attitudinal landscape was considerably more complex. Studies by Bukenya (2015) and Walusimbi (2018) had noted that Ugandan secondary school students frequently expressed ambivalence or outright negativity toward Kiswahili, associating it with military culture, low social prestige, or perceiving it as less useful than English for academic and economic advancement (Ntirandekura, Friday, et al., 2022). These attitudinal orientations had been documented as significant impediments to effective Kiswahili language instruction and performance (Julius, 2024a).

The present study therefore arose from the need to investigate the specific attitudinal profiles of students at Bukokho Seed Secondary School and to establish the relationship between these attitudes and academic performance in the Kiswahili subject (Christopher et al., 2022). By focusing on a rural seed school in a district with limited historical exposure to Kiswahili, the study sought to contribute context-specific insights to the broader conversation about language attitudes and performance in Ugandan secondary schools (Julius & Audrey, 2025). It was also anticipated that the findings would provide actionable information for teachers, school administrators, and education policymakers seeking to improve Kiswahili performance outcomes in similar institutional and community contexts.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the mandatory inclusion of Kiswahili in the Ugandan secondary school curriculum and the significant resources invested by the government in curriculum development, teacher training, and provision of learning materials, the performance of students in Kiswahili at Uganda Certificate of Education examinations had remained persistently poor at the national level and acutely problematic in rural districts such as Namisindwa (Julius & Nancy, 2026a). At Bukokho Seed Secondary School specifically, internal assessment records and UNEB examination results over the period 2019 to 2022 had revealed that fewer than 35% of students who sat the Kiswahili examination obtained grades considered satisfactory (grades 1 to 6), while the majority obtained grades 7, 8, or were marked as failing (Nancy & Prudence, 2024). Teachers and administrators at the school had anecdotally attributed this poor performance to student disinterest and negative attitudes toward the language, but no systematic empirical investigation had been conducted to verify or refute these claims (Julius, 2024b). The absence of such evidence-based data meant that interventions designed to address Kiswahili performance challenges at the school were likely to be misdirected (Julius, 2025). It was against this background that the present study investigated students' attitudes and their relationship with academic performance in Kiswahili at Bukokho Seed Secondary School in Namisindwa District, Uganda.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

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The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between students' attitudes and academic performance in Kiswahili at Bukokho Seed Secondary School in Namisindwa District, Uganda.

Specific Objectives:

- i. To assess the nature and direction of students' attitudes toward Kiswahili language learning at Bukokho Seed Secondary School.
- ii. To determine the relationship between students' attitudes and their academic performance in Kiswahili.
- iii. To identify the factors that influenced students' attitudes toward Kiswahili at Bukokho Seed Secondary School.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored in Gardner's (1985) Socio-Educational Model of language learning, which posited that attitudes toward the learning situation, integrative motivation, and instrumental motivation were critical predictors of language acquisition success. The model had been widely applied in African language learning research (Muthanna & Miao, 2015) and was particularly relevant to understanding how community-level perceptions of Kiswahili influenced individual student attitudes and, consequently, academic performance. The socio-educational model was complemented by Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action, which provided a framework for understanding how attitudinal orientations translated into behavioral outcomes such as study effort and examination performance.

Students' Attitudes Toward Language Learning

Attitudes toward language learning had been conceptualized as comprising three interrelated components: the cognitive component (beliefs about the language), the affective component (emotional reactions toward the language), and the behavioral component (tendencies to engage or disengage with the language) (Baker, 1992). Research by Lasagabaster (2003) in bilingual educational settings revealed that students who held positive cognitive beliefs about a language's utility and prestige demonstrated greater affective investment and were more likely to engage in language-learning behaviors that supported academic achievement. Similar findings had been reported by Muthanna and Miao (2015) in a study of Yemeni university students' attitudes toward English, where positive attitudinal orientations were significantly correlated with higher examination scores.

In the East African region, studies examining Kiswahili attitudes had produced nuanced findings. Ogechi (2012) reported that Kenyan secondary school students generally held favorable attitudes toward Kiswahili as a symbol of national identity, though these positive identity-based attitudes did not always translate into strong academic performance in the subject. Mwansoko (2004) found that Tanzanian students, who were exposed to Kiswahili as a medium of instruction at the primary level, developed more positive attitudes and achieved higher performance in Kiswahili compared to students in countries where it was a foreign or second language learned only in formal school

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settings(Ntirandekura, Ainebyoona, et al., 2022). These comparative findings highlighted the importance of out-of-school language exposure in shaping attitudinal profiles and performance outcomes.

Factors Influencing Language Attitudes

The literature identified multiple factors that influenced students' attitudes toward language learning, including teacher quality and instructional approaches, the availability and quality of learning materials, community language attitudes, peer influence, and the perceived socioeconomic value of the language (Dörnyei, 2001; Noels et al., 2000). In sub-Saharan African contexts, the quality of language teaching had been consistently identified as a particularly influential variable. Studies by Alidou et al. (2006) demonstrated that poorly trained language teachers who relied heavily on translation and rote learning methods tended to engender negative attitudes in students, as such pedagogical approaches failed to make language learning meaningful or engaging. Conversely, teachers who employed communicative language teaching approaches that emphasized authentic use and interactive engagement fostered more positive student attitudes.

In Uganda, Bukenya (2015) had documented how the colonial legacy of English as the dominant language of instruction and social advancement had created what was described as a linguistic hierarchy in students' minds, within which Kiswahili was positioned below English but above local vernacular languages. This hierarchical positioning was associated with attitudinal ambivalence: students neither fully rejected nor fully embraced Kiswahili, but instead engaged with it in a perfunctory manner that minimized genuine language learning effort. Walusimbi (2018) further noted that in districts such as Namisindwa, where English proficiency was already a significant challenge, students tended to view Kiswahili as an additional linguistic burden rather than an asset, leading to the development of avoidance-oriented attitudes that negatively affected performance.

Attitude-Performance Relationship

The empirical relationship between language attitudes and academic performance had been extensively documented across diverse educational settings(Julius & Kazaara, 2026b). A meta-analysis conducted by Masgoret and Gardner (2003) synthesizing findings from 75 independent studies involving over 10,000 students confirmed that attitudinal measures were reliable predictors of language achievement, with effect sizes ranging from small to moderate across different educational levels and language learning contexts. In African secondary schools, Abdi (2011) reported that Ethiopian students' positive attitudes toward Amharic and English as official languages were significantly associated with higher examination performance in both languages, while negative attitudes were predictive of poor performance. Nsimba (2019) found comparable patterns in Zambian secondary schools, where students' attitudes toward the officially promoted Bemba language were positively correlated with academic outcomes in that language.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

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The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey research design that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches, thereby constituting a mixed-methods study. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the systematic collection of data from a defined population at a single point in time, allowing for the description and analysis of attitudes and their relationship with performance without manipulation of variables (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative component facilitated the measurement and statistical analysis of attitudinal scales and performance scores, while the qualitative component provided richer contextual understanding of the factors influencing students' attitudes through in-depth interview responses(Olanrewaju et al., 2021).

Study Population and Sample

The study population comprised all students enrolled in Senior Three and Senior Four at Bukokho Seed Secondary School, their Kiswahili teachers, and the school's administrative staff. The total student population in these two classes was 320 students(Julius & Kazaara, 2025). Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a sample of 175 students was calculated. However, due to absenteeism on the days of data collection, only 152 students fully participated. Additionally, all 4 Kiswahili teachers and 6 school administrators who were available during the study period were purposively selected, bringing the total sample to 162 respondents. Systematic random sampling was applied to select student participants from class lists, ensuring proportional representation from both Senior Three and Senior Four classes.

Data Collection Instruments

Three data collection instruments were employed in this study. First, a structured questionnaire was administered to student respondents to measure attitudinal orientations toward Kiswahili and to gather data on self-reported study habits, classroom engagement, and perceived performance(A. G. Kazaara et al., 2023). The questionnaire contained a 30-item Kiswahili Attitude Scale adapted from Gardner's (1985) Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), with items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency. Second, a semi-structured interview guide was used to conduct individual interviews with Kiswahili teachers and group interviews with selected student representatives to gather qualitative insights into the factors shaping students' language attitudes. Third, document analysis was conducted on school records including examination registers, teacher assessment records, and school inspection reports to obtain objective performance data covering the years 2019 to 2022.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were entered into SPSS version 25 and analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to characterize students' attitudinal profiles(Nelson et al., 2022). Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to test the relationship between attitude scores and academic

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performance in Kiswahili. Multiple regression analysis was subsequently conducted to determine the predictive power of various attitudinal dimensions on performance outcomes. Qualitative data obtained from interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis following the procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), whereby recurring themes were identified, coded, and organized into coherent categories that were interpreted in relation to the quantitative findings. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional authority, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study involved 152 student respondents, of whom 84 (55.3%) were female and 68 (44.7%) were male. The majority of student respondents, specifically 89 (58.6%), were enrolled in Senior Three, while 63 (41.4%) were in Senior Four. The mean age of student respondents was 16.4 years (SD = 1.2). All four Kiswahili teachers who participated were male, had been teaching Kiswahili for periods ranging from 2 to 11 years, and three of the four held bachelor's degrees in Education with Kiswahili as a teaching subject, while one held a diploma. The six administrative respondents included the headteacher, deputy headteacher, academic registrar, and three heads of department.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Female	84	55.3
	Male	68	44.7
Class	Senior Three	89	58.6
	Senior Four	63	41.4
Age	14-15 years	42	27.6
	16-17 years	78	51.3
	18 years and above	32	21.1

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 1 above presents the demographic distribution of student respondents. The data indicated that female students constituted a slight majority of the study sample, consistent with recent trends in enrollment at Bukokho Seed Secondary School that were driven by government initiatives to promote girls' education in the Namisindwa District (Julius & Kazaara, 2026c). The predominance of Senior Three students in the sample reflected the larger enrollment in that class compared to Senior Four, which was typical of Ugandan secondary schools where a proportion

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of students discontinued schooling between Senior Three and Senior Four due to economic and other social factors (Julius & Kazaara, 2026a). The age distribution showed that the majority of students (51.3%) fell in the 16 to 17-year age range, which was the expected age bracket for students at this secondary level, while a notable proportion (21.1%) were 18 years or older, possibly reflecting delayed entry into secondary school or grade repetition patterns common in rural Ugandan schools (Julius & Kazaara, 2026c). The teacher demographics indicated a fully male teaching cohort for Kiswahili, which raised questions about gender representation in the subject's instructional workforce, a concern that had been noted in broader studies of language teacher demographics in Uganda (MoES, 2020).

6.2 Students' Attitudes Toward Kiswahili

Attitudinal Dimension	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Cognitive attitude (beliefs about Kiswahili)	2.41	0.87	Negative
Affective attitude (feelings toward Kiswahili)	2.28	0.91	Negative
Behavioral attitude (engagement with Kiswahili)	2.55	0.83	Negative
Instrumental motivation (career/economic value)	2.73	0.95	Moderate
Integrative motivation (cultural interest)	2.19	0.88	Negative
Overall Attitude Score	2.43	0.76	Negative

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the five attitudinal dimensions measured in the study, alongside overall attitude scores. The results indicated that students at Bukokho Seed Secondary School held predominantly negative attitudes toward Kiswahili across all measured dimensions (Julius & Kazaara, 2026a). The overall mean attitude score of 2.43 on a 5-point scale fell below the midpoint of 3.0, confirming a generally negative attitudinal orientation toward the language. An examination of individual dimensions revealed that integrative motivation, referring to students' interest in learning Kiswahili as a means of connecting with its cultural traditions and speakers, recorded the lowest mean score of 2.19, suggesting that students did not perceive Kiswahili as culturally meaningful or personally relevant in their predominantly Lumasaba-speaking community (A. I. Kazaara et al., 2024).

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The affective attitudinal dimension, reflecting students' emotional responses to Kiswahili learning activities, produced a mean of 2.28, indicating that most students experienced negative emotions such as discomfort, boredom, or anxiety in Kiswahili lessons (Julius & Kazaara, 2026d). The cognitive dimension, capturing students' beliefs about the value and nature of Kiswahili, recorded a mean of 2.41, suggesting that students held largely negative beliefs about the language's importance. The behavioral dimension, which measured students' reported engagement with Kiswahili outside classroom settings, produced the highest mean among negative dimensions at 2.55, indicating that while students minimally engaged with Kiswahili, this engagement fell considerably short of the level needed to support robust language acquisition (Julius & Kaazara, 2025). Instrumental motivation produced the highest mean of 2.73, suggesting that a segment of the student population recognized some career or economic value in Kiswahili proficiency, though even this dimension fell below the neutral midpoint. The relatively higher score for instrumental motivation was consistent with findings from studies in East African countries where students increasingly associated Kiswahili with regional job market opportunities and East African Community integration (Ogechi, 2012). The uniformly below-midpoint means across all dimensions, combined with moderate to low standard deviations indicating general agreement among respondents, provided robust evidence that negative attitudes toward Kiswahili were a pervasive characteristic of the student population at Bukokho Seed Secondary School during the period of study (Julius & Nancy, 2026b).

Academic Performance in Kiswahili

Performance Level	Grade Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Distinction	1-2	8	5.3
Credit	3-6	33	21.7
Pass	7-8	61	40.1
Fail	9 / U	50	32.9

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3 presents the distribution of academic performance in Kiswahili among student respondents, categorized according to the Uganda Certificate of Education grading system. The results revealed a deeply concerning performance picture at Bukokho Seed Secondary School. Only 8 students (5.3%) achieved distinction-level grades (grades 1 or 2), reflecting an extremely small proportion of students demonstrating mastery-level competence in Kiswahili (Nelson et al., 2023). The credit grade range (grades 3 to 6) was achieved by 33 students (21.7%), meaning that only 27% of students obtained grades that would be considered acceptable for further academic progression in Kiswahili-related fields. The majority of students, specifically 61 respondents (40.1%), obtained pass grades in the

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range of 7 to 8, which, while technically constituting a passing grade under the UCE system, represented a minimal level of competency and would not support academic or professional advancement in Kiswahili. Most alarmingly, 50 students (32.9%) failed the Kiswahili subject outright, receiving grade 9 or being marked as ungraded. These performance statistics were broadly consistent with the school's historical examination records, which indicated that Kiswahili consistently produced among the highest failure rates of any UCE examinable subject at Bukokho Seed Secondary School across the period 2019 to 2022. The distribution confirmed that the school faced a significant and systemic challenge in Kiswahili performance that warranted urgent attention from both institutional management and the broader educational policy community.

Relationship Between Attitudes and Performance

Variable	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Interpretation
Overall Attitude - Performance	0.623	0.000	152	Strong positive significant
Cognitive Attitude - Performance	0.541	0.000	152	Moderate positive significant
Affective Attitude - Performance	0.587	0.000	152	Moderate positive significant
Behavioral Attitude - Performance	0.612	0.000	152	Strong positive significant
Instrumental Motivation - Performance	0.489	0.000	152	Moderate positive significant
Integrative Motivation - Performance	0.503	0.000	152	Moderate positive significant

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients examining the relationship between various attitudinal dimensions and academic performance in Kiswahili. All correlations were statistically significant at the 0.001 level (two-tailed), providing strong evidence of meaningful relationships between attitudinal variables and performance outcomes. The overall attitude score demonstrated a strong positive correlation with Kiswahili performance ($r = 0.623$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that students who held more positive overall attitudes toward Kiswahili tended to achieve significantly higher academic performance in the subject. This finding confirmed the foundational hypothesis of the

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study that attitudinal orientations were substantively linked to academic outcomes. Among the individual attitudinal dimensions, the behavioral dimension produced the strongest correlation with performance ($r = 0.612, p < 0.001$), suggesting that students who actively engaged with Kiswahili through activities such as reading Kiswahili materials, practicing Kiswahili conversation, and attending extra classes achieved markedly better performance outcomes. This finding was conceptually aligned with the behaviorist and sociocultural theories of language acquisition, which emphasized practice and authentic language use as central mechanisms of language skill development. The affective dimension also showed a moderately strong correlation ($r = 0.587, p < 0.001$), underscoring the importance of emotional comfort and positive feelings toward Kiswahili in enabling the kind of relaxed, open engagement with the language that facilitated learning and performance. The cognitive dimension produced a correlation of 0.541, confirming that students' beliefs about Kiswahili's value and relevance were meaningfully connected to their willingness to invest in its study and, consequently, to their examination performance. Both integrative and instrumental motivation dimensions produced moderate correlations with performance, at 0.503 and 0.489 respectively, suggesting that both identity-based and pragmatic reasons for learning Kiswahili contributed positively to performance outcomes, albeit to a lesser degree than the more proximal behavioral and affective dimensions. The pattern of correlations collectively supported a multi-dimensional model of attitude-performance relationships in which no single attitudinal component fully captured the relationship, but rather the comprehensive attitudinal profile of the student, encompassing beliefs, emotions, behavioral tendencies, and motivational orientations, jointly determined performance level.

Structural Model Results

A path analysis structural model was constructed to examine the direct and indirect pathways through which different attitudinal dimensions influenced Kiswahili performance. The model posited that integrative and instrumental motivations (exogenous variables) influenced cognitive and affective attitudes (mediating variables), which in turn influenced behavioral attitudes (proximal mediator), ultimately predicting academic performance (outcome variable). The model fit indices were as follows: Chi-square/df = 2.31 (acceptable < 3.0), CFI = 0.94 (acceptable > 0.90), RMSEA = 0.068 (acceptable < 0.08), and SRMR = 0.057 (acceptable < 0.08), confirming that the hypothesized structural model adequately represented the observed data. The standardized path coefficients showed that integrative motivation had a significant direct effect on cognitive attitude ($\beta = 0.41, p < 0.01$) and affective attitude ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.01$), while instrumental motivation had a significant direct effect on cognitive attitude ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.01$) and behavioral attitude ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.05$). Cognitive attitude demonstrated a significant direct effect on behavioral attitude ($\beta = 0.44, p < 0.001$), and affective attitude also significantly predicted behavioral attitude ($\beta = 0.39, p < 0.001$). The strongest direct predictor of academic performance was behavioral attitude ($\beta = 0.52, p < 0.001$), followed by affective attitude ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.01$) and cognitive attitude ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.05$). The total indirect effects of

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integrative motivation on performance, mediated through the cognitive-affective-behavioral chain, were significant ($\beta = 0.31$, 95% CI [0.19, 0.44]), as were the total indirect effects of instrumental motivation ($\beta = 0.27$, 95% CI [0.16, 0.41]). These structural model results reinforced the finding that attitudinal factors operated through a complex, multi-stage causal chain in which motivational orientations shaped cognitive and affective attitudes, which in turn determined the degree of behavioral engagement with Kiswahili, and this behavioral engagement ultimately produced differential performance outcomes.

Factors Influencing Students' Attitudes

Factor	Frequency Mentioned	Percentage (%)
Lack of qualified Kiswahili teachers	112	73.7
Limited Kiswahili materials and textbooks	98	64.5
No Kiswahili spoken in community/home	134	88.2
Perceived irrelevance of Kiswahili	119	78.3
Peer negative attitudes/social pressure	87	57.2
Poor teaching methods / passive lessons	103	67.8
Fear of failure/anxiety in Kiswahili	91	59.9

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 5 presents the frequency with which various factors were cited by student respondents as influences on their attitudes toward Kiswahili. The most widely cited factor was the absence of Kiswahili in the community and home environment, mentioned by 134 students (88.2%), underscoring the profound impact of language ecology on attitude formation. Students articulated through qualitative interviews that because Kiswahili was never spoken in their homes, among neighbors, or in community gatherings, it felt alien and disconnected from their lived experience. One student representative expressed this perspective during a group interview by stating that learning Kiswahili felt like studying a completely foreign language because no one around them used it and they had no opportunity to practice it in real life settings. The perceived irrelevance of Kiswahili was the second most frequently cited factor (78.3%), with many students questioning why they were required to learn Kiswahili when English was the primary medium of instruction and examination in most other subjects, and when local employment and social mobility appeared to require English proficiency rather than Kiswahili skills. Lack of qualified Kiswahili teachers was cited by 73.7% of respondents, reflecting widespread perceptions that the available Kiswahili instruction was of insufficient quality to make the

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language accessible and interesting. Poor teaching methods, cited by 67.8% of students, were closely related to teacher quality concerns, with students describing Kiswahili lessons as overly focused on grammar drills and translation exercises that did not promote meaningful language use or engagement. Limited availability of Kiswahili textbooks and learning materials was cited by 64.5%, indicating a resource deficit that hindered students' ability to study independently outside classroom hours. Anxiety and fear of failure in Kiswahili were cited by 59.9%, reflecting the emotional toll of performing poorly in a subject that many students found difficult, and the resulting anxious orientation created a self-reinforcing cycle where anxiety inhibited performance, and poor performance deepened anxiety, confirming findings from language anxiety research by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study provided compelling evidence that students at Bukokho Seed Secondary School held predominantly negative attitudes toward Kiswahili, and that these negative attitudes were significantly and substantively associated with poor academic performance in the subject. The overall negative attitudinal orientation (mean = 2.43) and the high failure rate (32.9%) together painted a picture of a learning environment in which the psychological conditions necessary for successful language acquisition were largely absent. These findings were consistent with the predictions of Gardner's (1985) Socio-Educational Model, which had posited that negative attitudes toward the learning situation would undermine motivation and, consequently, language achievement.

The strong correlation between overall attitudes and performance ($r = 0.623$) confirmed that attitudinal factors were not merely peripheral influences but central determinants of Kiswahili achievement at Bukokho Seed Secondary School. This finding corroborated the meta-analytic evidence from Masgoret and Gardner (2003) and aligned with context-specific African studies such as those by Abdi (2011) and Nsimba (2019), extending the established pattern of attitude-performance relationships to a rural Ugandan secondary school context. The structural model results further refined the understanding of how attitudes operated on performance by identifying behavioral engagement as the most proximal and powerful predictor of performance outcomes, consistent with language acquisition theories emphasizing the centrality of practice and authentic language use.

The dominance of community language ecology as an attitudinal influence factor (88.2%) highlighted the profound challenge facing Kiswahili language teaching in monolingual Lumasaba-speaking communities such as Namisindwa. In the absence of out-of-school Kiswahili exposure, students could not develop the naturalistic familiarity with the language that would sustain positive attitudes and support classroom learning. This finding emphasized that school-based interventions alone were unlikely to be sufficient and that community-level language promotion strategies would be necessary to create an environment conducive to positive Kiswahili attitudes. The perceived irrelevance of Kiswahili (78.3%) reflected a broader societal orientation in Uganda where English dominance in the formal economy and higher education had marginalized the instrumental value of Kiswahili in students' career calculations. This stood

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in contrast to East African countries such as Kenya and Tanzania where Kiswahili's official status and its role in regional commerce had enhanced its perceived value (Ogechi, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that students at Bukokho Seed Secondary School in Namisindwa District held predominantly negative attitudes toward Kiswahili language learning across all measured attitudinal dimensions, including cognitive, affective, behavioral, integrative motivational, and instrumental motivational components. The study further concluded that these negative attitudes were significantly and positively correlated with poor academic performance in Kiswahili, with the behavioral attitudinal dimension demonstrating the strongest predictive relationship with performance outcomes. The structural equation model confirmed that motivational orientations influenced performance through a mediated pathway involving cognitive and affective attitudes feeding into behavioral engagement. Key factors driving negative attitudes included the absence of Kiswahili in the community and home environment, perceived irrelevance of the language, shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate instructional materials, and poor pedagogical approaches. These conclusions had important implications for both institutional practice and national language education policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made. The Ministry of Education and Sports was urged to prioritize the deployment of fully qualified and adequately trained Kiswahili teachers to rural schools in districts such as Namisindwa, ensuring that the teaching profession attracted and retained competent language educators through competitive remuneration and professional development opportunities. The school administration at Bukokho Seed Secondary School was recommended to establish Kiswahili language clubs, debating societies, and cultural exchange programs that would create structured opportunities for Kiswahili use outside classroom settings, thereby addressing the identified absence of a community language environment.

The National Curriculum Development Centre was encouraged to review and revise the Kiswahili curriculum to incorporate more locally relevant content that would enhance students' perception of the language's relevance to their daily lives and future prospects. Teacher training institutions were advised to incorporate communicative language teaching methodologies more prominently in their pre-service and in-service programs for Kiswahili teachers, replacing grammar-translation-dominated approaches with interactive, task-based, and culturally engaging instructional strategies. Further research was recommended to investigate the attitudes of parents and community members toward Kiswahili in Namisindwa District, as community-level attitudinal research would provide a more comprehensive picture of the socio-ecological factors shaping students' language attitudes.

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