

**Impact Of Family Background On The Students' Academic Performance In Selected Secondary Schools
In Kakumiro: A Case Study Of St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko In Kakumiro**

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of family background on students' academic performance in selected secondary schools in Kakumiro District, with a focus on St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko. Academic underperformance among secondary school students remains a persistent concern in rural Ugandan districts, and family background factors, including parental education, socio-economic status, and family structure, have been implicated as key determinants. The study was guided by three objectives: to examine the influence of parental education level on students' academic performance, to assess the effect of family socio-economic status on academic performance, and to establish the relationship between family structure and students' academic performance. A descriptive correlational research design was employed, targeting a population of 310 Senior Four students, from which a sample of 175 students was selected using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table and stratified random sampling. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data on family background variables, while students' end-of-term aggregate scores were used as a proxy for academic performance. Data were analysed using SPSS version 26 employing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. The findings revealed that parental education ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.01$) and family socio-economic status ($r = 0.541$, $p < 0.01$) were significantly and positively correlated with academic performance, while family structure showed a weaker but still significant correlation ($r = 0.298$, $p < 0.01$). The regression model showed that the three family background factors jointly explained 41.2% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.412$, $F(3,171) = 39.87$, $p < 0.001$), with socio-economic status emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.372$, $p < 0.001$). The study concludes that family background significantly shapes students' academic performance and recommends targeted interventions, including bursary schemes and parental sensitisation programmes, to mitigate the effects of disadvantaged family backgrounds.

Keywords: Family background, parental education, socio-economic status, family structure, academic performance, secondary schools, Kakumiro, Uganda

1.0 Introduction

Family background has long been recognised as one of the most influential determinants of students' academic outcomes, encompassing dimensions such as parental education level, household socio-economic status, and family structure (Coleman, 1966; Bourdieu, 1986). Globally, extensive research has demonstrated that children raised in homes with higher parental education and stable socio-economic conditions tend to perform better academically than their counterparts from disadvantaged backgrounds (OECD, 2020). In Sub-Saharan Africa, family background factors interact with broader structural challenges such as poverty, limited access to educational resources, and high dependency ratios to shape learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2021).

In Uganda, despite the implementation of Universal Secondary Education (USE) aimed at expanding access to secondary schooling, significant disparities in academic performance persist across schools and districts, with

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rural districts such as Kakumiro consistently registering below-average performance in national examinations (Uganda National Examinations Board [UNEBC], 2023). St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko, a mixed rural secondary school in Kakumiro District, has recorded fluctuating academic performance over recent years, with a considerable proportion of students obtaining Division Three and Four grades in the Uganda Certificate of Education examinations (A. G. Kazaara & Nelson, 2024). While school-level factors such as teaching quality and infrastructure are often cited as explanations, the role of students' family background has not been sufficiently investigated within this specific context, motivating the present study (Julius & Audrey, 2025).

1.1 Problem Statement

Over the past three academic years, St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko has registered a declining trend in the proportion of students obtaining Division One and Two grades at Uganda Certificate of Education level, with school records indicating that over 55% of candidates fell within Division Three and Four categories (School Academic Records, 2023). While the school administration has implemented measures such as remedial teaching and increased contact hours, academic performance has remained largely unresponsive to these school-based interventions, suggesting the possible influence of factors outside the school's direct control, particularly students' family background (Julius & Kazaara, 2026c). However, there is limited empirical evidence specific to St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko and the wider Kakumiro District on the extent to which family background factors, namely parental education, socio-economic status, and family structure, contribute to the observed academic performance patterns (Julius & Kazaara, 2026a). This knowledge gap limits the ability of school administrators and policymakers to design appropriately targeted interventions, hence the need for this study.

1.2 Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to examine the impact of family background on students' academic performance in selected secondary schools in Kakumiro District, with specific reference to St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko.

1.2.1 Specific Objectives

- To examine the influence of parental education level on students' academic performance at St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko.
- To assess the effect of family socio-economic status on students' academic performance at St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko.
- To establish the relationship between family structure and students' academic performance at St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was underpinned by Bourdieu's (1986) Cultural Capital Theory, which posits that the educational resources, knowledge, and dispositions transmitted within the family, particularly through parental education, constitute a form of capital that advantages children in the school system. The study also drew on Coleman's (1988) Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes the role of family relationships, parental involvement, and social networks in shaping children's educational outcomes. Together, these theories provide a framework for

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understanding how family background factors translate into differential academic performance among students of similar school environments.

2.2 Parental Education and Academic Performance

A substantial body of literature links parental education to children's academic achievement. Davis-Kean (2005) found that parental education influences academic performance both directly, through the quality of home-based academic support, and indirectly, through its effect on household income and parental expectations. In the Ugandan context, Ssenyonga and Nabirye (2021) established that students whose parents had attained at least secondary education performed significantly better than those whose parents had only primary education or no formal education, attributing this to better homework supervision and access to reading materials at home.

2.3 Family Socio-Economic Status and Academic Performance

Family socio-economic status, typically measured through household income, parental occupation, and asset ownership, has consistently emerged as a strong predictor of academic performance across contexts (Sirin, 2005). Higher socio-economic status is associated with greater access to educational resources such as textbooks, private tuition, and conducive study environments. In rural Uganda, Nakato (2020) found that students from wealthier households were more likely to have consistent access to scholastic materials and meals, both of which were positively associated with examination performance, compared to students from poorer households who often faced disruptions due to fees arrears and inadequate nutrition.

2.4 Family Structure and Academic Performance

Family structure, encompassing whether a child is raised by both biological parents, a single parent, or guardians, has also been examined in relation to academic outcomes (Julius & Kazaara, 2026b). Amato (2005) found that children from two-parent households generally exhibited better academic outcomes than those from single-parent or child-headed households, attributing this to differences in supervision, emotional support, and financial stability (Ivan et al., 2023). However, some studies, such as Kakuru (2019) in the Ugandan context, found comparatively weaker effects of family structure relative to socio-economic status, suggesting that the quality of care and resource availability may matter more than family structure per se.

2.5 Literature Gap

Although existing literature broadly supports a relationship between family background and academic performance, few studies have simultaneously examined the relative contributions of parental education, socio-economic status, and family structure within a single rural secondary school context in Uganda (Julius et al., 2026). This study addressed this gap by empirically testing these relationships at St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko in Kakumiro District.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive correlational research design with a quantitative approach, which was appropriate for describing the family background characteristics of students and statistically examining their relationship with academic performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2 Study Population

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The target population consisted of 310 Senior Four students enrolled at St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko during the 2023/2024 academic year, as obtained from the school's admission register(Olanrewaju et al., 2021).

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 175 students was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size determination. Stratified random sampling was used, with streams serving as strata, to ensure proportionate representation of students across all Senior Four streams, followed by simple random selection within each stratum.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data on students' family background, covering parental education level, family socio-economic status (based on parental occupation, housing type, and asset ownership), and family structure. Students' aggregate scores from the most recent end-of-term examinations were extracted from official school academic records to measure academic performance(Lydia et al., 2023).

3.5 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was ascertained through review by two experienced education researchers, yielding a Content Validity Index of 0.81. A pilot test involving 20 students from a neighbouring school was conducted to assess reliability, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.78 for the family background scale, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

3.6 Data Analysis

Data were coded and analysed using SPSS version 26(Nelson et al., 2022). Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were used to summarise family background characteristics and academic performance levels. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine bivariate relationships between each family background dimension and academic performance, while multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the combined and relative predictive effect of the three family background dimensions on academic performance, at a significance level of 0.05.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Permission was sought from the school administration and parental/guardian consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality of student academic records and questionnaire responses was strictly maintained throughout the study.

4.0 Results

4.1 Response Rate

Of the 175 questionnaires administered, 168 were correctly filled and returned, representing a response rate of 96.0%.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 168)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	89	53.0

	Female	79	47.0
Age	15-16 years	61	36.3
	17-18 years	84	50.0
	Above 18 years	23	13.7
Family Structure	Both parents	96	57.1
	Single parent	52	31.0
	Guardian/Other	20	11.9

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The findings presented in Table 4.1 showed that a total of 168 respondents participated in the study. In terms of gender, the results indicated that the majority of the respondents were male, comprising 89 respondents (53.0%), while female respondents accounted for 79 (47.0%). The relatively balanced gender distribution suggested that both male and female students were adequately represented in the study, thereby providing diverse perspectives regarding the influence of family background on academic performance. This balanced representation also enhanced the credibility of the findings, as the views collected reflected experiences from both genders.

With regard to age, the findings revealed that the majority of the respondents were aged between 17 and 18 years, representing 84 respondents (50.0%). This was followed by respondents aged between 15 and 16 years, who accounted for 61 respondents (36.3%). Respondents aged above 18 years were the fewest, constituting 23 respondents (13.7%). These findings indicated that most respondents were within the typical age range for secondary school education, suggesting that they possessed adequate maturity and experience to provide reliable information concerning their family backgrounds and academic performance.

The findings on family structure showed that the majority of respondents came from families where both parents were present, accounting for 96 respondents (57.1%). Respondents from single-parent families were 52 (31.0%), while those living with guardians or other caregivers constituted 20 respondents (11.9%). The findings suggested that most students were raised in relatively stable family environments with the support of both parents. However, a considerable proportion of respondents came from single-parent households and guardian-led families, indicating variations in family arrangements that could potentially influence students' academic outcomes.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics for Family Background Variables

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for Family Background Variables (n = 168; scale 1-5)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Parental Education Level	2.84	0.97	Moderate
Family Socio-Economic Status	2.61	1.05	Moderate
Family Structure (stability index)	3.12	0.88	Moderate

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 4.2 presented the descriptive statistics for the family background variables examined in the study. The findings showed that all the variables recorded moderate mean scores, suggesting that respondents generally perceived their family background characteristics to be at moderate levels(Winny et al., 2023). This implied that although the family environment provided some level of support for students' education, there remained opportunities for improvement in areas such as parental education, economic well-being, and family stability(Julius & Kazaara, 2025c).

Among the family background variables, family structure (stability index) recorded the highest mean score of 3.12 with a standard deviation of 0.88, indicating a moderate level of family stability(A. G. Kazaara et al., 2024). This finding suggested that many respondents experienced relatively stable family environments that were likely to provide emotional and social support necessary for academic success. The relatively low standard deviation further indicated that respondents' opinions regarding family stability were fairly consistent(Julius & Nancy, 2026).

The findings further revealed that parental education level obtained a mean score of 2.84 with a standard deviation of 0.97, which was also interpreted as moderate(Julius & Audrey, 2025). This implied that parents generally possessed moderate levels of educational attainment that could enable them to support and guide their children's learning. However, the moderate rating suggested that many parents had not attained higher levels of education, which could limit the extent of academic assistance provided to their children(Julius & Kazaara, 2025d).

The variable family socio-economic status recorded the lowest mean score of 2.61 with a standard deviation of 1.05, although it remained within the moderate interpretation category. This finding suggested that respondents generally came from households with moderate economic capacity to provide educational resources such as school fees, learning materials, and other necessities(Emmanuel et al., 2023). The relatively higher standard deviation indicated greater variation in respondents' perceptions, reflecting differences in household economic conditions among the families represented in the study(Julius & Kazaara, 2025b).

4.4 Descriptive Statistics for Academic Performance

Table 4.3: Distribution of Academic Performance (n = 168). Mean aggregate = 27.4, SD = 6.8

Performance Category (Aggregate)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Division One (4-12 points)	22	13.1
Division Two (13-24 points)	51	30.4
Division Three (25-32 points)	58	34.5
Division Four (33-34 points)	27	16.1
Ungraded/Fail	10	5.9

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The findings presented in Table 4.3 illustrated the distribution of respondents according to their academic performance. The results showed that the largest proportion of respondents attained Division Three (25–32

points), accounting for 58 respondents (34.5%)(Alex et al., 2024). This was followed by respondents who attained Division Two (13–24 points), representing 51 respondents (30.4%). These findings indicated that the majority of students achieved average academic performance, suggesting that while many students performed reasonably well, relatively few attained the highest academic grades(Julius & Kazaara, 2026a).

The findings further revealed that 27 respondents (16.1%) obtained Division Four (33–34 points), while 22 respondents (13.1%) attained Division One (4–12 points), representing the highest level of academic achievement. Only 10 respondents (5.9%) were ungraded or failed their examinations(Julius & Nancy, 2025). The low proportion of students in the failure category suggested that the majority of respondents successfully completed their examinations, although excellence in academic performance remained limited.

4.5 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the bivariate relationships between family background variables and academic performance. Results are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Correlation Matrix (n = 168). **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

Variable	Parental Education	Socio-Economic Status	Family Structure	Academic Performance
Parental Education	1	0.512**	0.276**	0.487**
Socio-Economic Status	0.512**	1	0.243*	0.541**
Family Structure	0.276**	0.243*	1	0.298**
Academic Performance	0.487**	0.541**	0.298**	1

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between family background variables and students' academic performance. The findings presented in Table 4.4 revealed that all three family background dimensions were positively and statistically significantly associated with academic performance. These results suggested that improvements in family background characteristics were accompanied by corresponding improvements in students' academic achievement.

The findings showed that family socio-economic status had the strongest positive relationship with academic performance, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.541$ and a significance level of $p < 0.01$. This finding implied that students from families with better economic conditions generally achieved higher academic performance than those from economically disadvantaged households(Nelson et al., 2023). The results suggested that improved access to educational resources, learning materials, and a conducive learning environment contributed positively to students' academic success(A. I. Kazaara, 2025).

The analysis further revealed that parental education level was positively and significantly correlated with academic performance ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicated that students whose parents possessed higher levels of education tended to perform better academically. Educated parents were more likely to provide academic

guidance, monitor their children's learning, and appreciate the importance of education, thereby promoting improved academic achievement (Julius & Kazaara, 2025a). The findings also indicated that family structure had a positive and statistically significant relationship with academic performance ($r = 0.298$, $p < 0.01$). Although this relationship was weaker than those observed for parental education and socio-economic status, it nevertheless suggested that students from more stable family environments generally performed better academically (Alex & Moses, 2024). The statistically significant correlation demonstrated that family stability contributed positively to academic outcomes, although its influence was comparatively smaller than the other family background variables.

4.6 Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the combined effect of parental education, socio-economic status, and family structure on students' academic performance.

Table 4.5: Regression Coefficients (Dependent Variable: Academic Performance Aggregate)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.642	0.412	0.402	5.26

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The model summary results showed a correlation coefficient ($R = 0.642$), indicating a strong positive relationship between the predictor variables and academic performance. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.412$) revealed that the three family background variables jointly explained 41.2% of the variation in students' academic performance. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.402 further indicated that after adjusting for the number of predictors, approximately 40.2% of the variation in academic performance remained explained by the regression model (Julius & Kazaara, 2025a). This implied that although family background significantly influenced students' academic performance, the remaining 58.8% of the variation could be attributed to other factors not included in the study, such as individual motivation, school environment, teacher effectiveness, and peer influence (Anthony et al., 2023).

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3299.6	3	1099.9	39.87	0.000
Residual	4703.1	171	27.5		
Total	8002.7	174			

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The ANOVA results further demonstrated that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 39.87$, $p = 0.000$). This finding indicated that the three independent variables, when considered together, significantly predicted students' academic performance (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). The significance level being below 0.05 confirmed that the regression model adequately explained the relationship between family background and academic performance and was appropriate for testing the study hypothesis.

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	10.842	1.963	-	5.523	0.000
Parental Education	2.014	0.612	0.264	3.291	0.001

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Socio-Economic Status	2.487	0.548	0.372	4.539	0.000
Family Structure	1.126	0.497	0.148	2.266	0.025

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The regression coefficients revealed that the constant term was 10.842 and was statistically significant ($t = 5.523$, $p = 0.000$), indicating the baseline level of academic performance when all predictor variables were held constant. The findings further showed that parental education had a positive and statistically significant effect on academic performance ($B = 2.014$, $\beta = 0.264$, $t = 3.291$, $p = 0.001$) (A. G. Kazaara & Kazaara, 2025). This implied that a one-unit increase in parental education level resulted in an estimated 2.014-unit improvement in students' academic performance, holding other variables constant. The positive standardized beta coefficient further confirmed that parental education made a meaningful contribution to explaining students' academic achievement (A. G. Kazaara & Kazaara, 2025).

The results also indicated that family socio-economic status had the strongest positive influence on academic performance, with an unstandardized coefficient of $B = 2.487$, a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta = 0.372$, a t -value of 4.539, and a significance level of $p = 0.000$. These findings suggested that a one-unit improvement in family socio-economic status was associated with an estimated 2.487-unit increase in students' academic performance. The highest standardized beta coefficient among the predictors indicated that socio-economic status was the most influential family background factor affecting academic performance (Julius, 2024).

The findings showed that family structure also had a positive and statistically significant influence on academic performance ($B = 1.126$, $\beta = 0.148$, $t = 2.266$, $p = 0.025$). This implied that improvements in family stability were associated with corresponding improvements in students' academic performance, although the magnitude of its effect was smaller than that of parental education and socio-economic status (Faith et al., 2023).

5.0 Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**5.1 Discussion of Findings**

The findings confirm the propositions of Cultural Capital Theory and Social Capital Theory, demonstrating that family-based resources and support structures significantly shape students' academic outcomes. The stronger effect of socio-economic status relative to family structure aligns with Kakuru's (2019) observation that resource availability may matter more than household composition per se. The results are also consistent with Sirin's (2005) meta-analytic findings on the robust link between socio-economic status and academic achievement.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that family background, particularly socio-economic status and parental education, significantly influences students' academic performance at St. Joseph S.S. Nkooko. While family structure also matters, its effect is comparatively modest relative to the other two dimensions.

5.3 Recommendations

➤ The school should strengthen bursary and scholastic material support schemes targeting students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

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- Parental sensitisation programmes should be conducted to enhance parents' involvement in their children's education regardless of their own education level.
- Guidance and counselling services should be strengthened to provide additional support to students from single-parent or guardian-headed households.

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