

Parental Level Of Income And Learner Retention In Primary Schools Of Rwamucucu Subcounty, Rukiga District, Uganda
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Abstract

The study aimed at establishing the relationship between the role of parental level of income and learner retention in primary schools in Rwamucucu sub county, Rukiga district, Uganda. A case study research design adopting quantitative and qualitative approaches was used. Data from a sample of 504 respondents was obtained using questionnaires and interview guides which were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. The results of the study showed that parents' level of income needs had a positive and significant relationship with pupils' retention rate ($r=0.574^{**}$, $Sig=0.01$). The study concluded that parental level of income plays a vital role in pupils' retention in UPE schools of Rwamucucu Sub-County. The study recommended that since poverty highly affects pupils' retention, parents should be sensitized to engage in income generating activities so that they can meet the basic needs as well as the vital costs for their children's education, school administrations should also involve parents and all the stakeholders in the planning process including engaging them in all the meetings.

Keywords: Parents, Income, Learners, Primary Schools, District.

Introduction

Student retention in schools directly affects the quality of education that students receive. several social and psychosocial factors can influence students' decisions to enroll in higher education (Anthony et al., 2023). Grade and pupil retention tends to stigmatize repeat offenders, undermine their self-esteem and sense of belonging in school, and again inform their loss of engagement. from the learning process (W. Godfrey et al., 2023). Retention of pupils in primary schools has been a subject of interest since the inception of formal education systems (Brighton et al., 2023). Students withdrawing before completion is costly to students and their families. In this study, parental involvement is hypothesized to influence student retention in schools (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). This proposed

study investigated the impact of parental involvement and student retention in primary schools in Rwamucucu Sub-County, Rukiga District, South Western Uganda.

Njeru and Orodho (2020) agree that poverty is the critical factors responsible for low access and poor participation in education (S. Godfrey et al., 2023). High levels of poverty at the household level have resulted in poor households either not enrolling their children in primary schools or unable to sustain continuous participation of those enrolled due to inability to meet various requirements (Mark et al., 2023). This has resulted in inadequate provision of educational facilities for enrolment, poor quality

Received: 16.01.2024

Accepted: 25.01.2024

Published on: 31.01.2024

education and high dropout rates among the poor (John et al., 2023). According to Otunge (2019), a large family is quite strongly associated with socioeconomic disadvantage. A large family limits parental involvement in each child's academic achievement (Victoria et al., 2023). This leads to low participation of the child in school activities and may eventually lead to early school leaving. High levels of poverty are found in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL); access to education is lower in these areas than in areas with high potential (UNESCO, 2022). Thus, poverty is addressed in two ways, the first being the inability to cover the indirect costs of schooling such as school supplies and teaching aids, uniforms, transport to and from school and food (Vincent & Peter, 2023).

Several studies conducted in Malawi, Ghana, Zambia, Ethiopia and Tanzania have shown that children are prevented from effectively participating and remaining in school due to the inability to afford such costs (Kelly 2019). In line with this situation (Christopher et al., 2022) found that in the richest households, 76% of their children attend school compared to 40% of the poorest households; that is, children from poor households have much lower attendance than children from wealthier households. Onyango (2000) showed that parents' socio-economic

background influences their children's participation and retention in education. This is especially true for developing countries, where children from poor families are not provided with adequate educational materials and most of them are not inclined to enroll in school. If they enroll, they are more likely to drop out than children who come from well-off families. Briggs (2010) cited in Mbai (2014) argues that poor families may consider bearing the cost of sending their children to school, but may abandon the whole exercise when more expenditure is demanded.

A January 2001 report in the Journal of Current Economic Policy entitled Determinants of School Enrollment Performance in Bulgaria revealed that the role of income between the poor and the rich is a major determinant of school access. These poor families are limited in their investment in education and drop out of school early (Kanyerere & Muhammed, 2023). At home, the child may not have appropriate equipment and resources that would allow him to continue school work. In some households of the poor, there may be no table and chairs that can be used for reading, while the light for night study is either of very poor quality or none, so the family environment is not conducive to learning (Turyatamba et al. , 2022). The child is eventually too frustrated to continue schooling under these difficult conditions.

Statement of the problem

Parental involvement has always been critical to student retention and student achievement in any given educational institution (Tumusabe Ezera et al., 2022). Similarly, the government of Uganda recognizes the central role that parental involvement has to play in ensuring that children are retained in schools by meeting their children's educational needs (Christopher et al., 2022). Governments, like parents, have a shared responsibility around the world for the education of a nation's children. Indeed, the Government of Uganda has made great efforts to support UPE schools with necessary resources, such as recruiting and paying teachers' salaries, providing teaching materials to schools, developing infrastructure such as classrooms, building latrines, as well as providing supportive supervision to achieve good academic performance (Victoria et al., 2023). Despite the government's efforts, primary school retention and enrollment in the Kigezi region, particularly Rukiga district, remains persistently low. (UNEB, 2020, 2021, 2022). The evidence provided from the three year results mentioned above indicates that out of the total number of 8,998 candidates who sat for the PLE in the last three years; In 2020, 2021 and 2022, only 213, representing 2.4 percent, were able to pass at grade I, compared to 1,666 (18.52%) unclassified and 558 (6.2%) at grade X (overall failures). UNEB (2020, 2021, 2022) is therefore not eligible for any post-primary institution. It also appears that most parents in Rwamucucu sub-county have misperceived the responsibility for their children's education to be entirely with the government and are less involved in providing the required support. The government alone cannot provide for all the educational needs of its children without the support of parents (Bitamazire, 2018). It is therefore clear from all the evidence provided that the situation of poor student enrollment and retention is quite appalling and leaves much to be desired. It is feared that if this trend does not improve, many children will drop out of schools and the government's efforts through UPE would be futile.

It is against this background that the researcher is motivated to determine the role of parental involvement and student retention in primary schools in Rwamucucu County, Rukiga District.

Objective of the Study

The study was guided by the following research objective:

To establish the relationship between the role of parental level of income and learner retention in primary schools in Rukiga district, Uganda.

Hypothesis

Parents' level of income has no significant relationship with pupils' retention

Methodology

The study used a case study while utilizing a descriptive approach. A case study design as an inquiry explores the subject under study in its real-life context (Yin, 2009). It is thus appropriate because of its advantages including providing an in-depth review, holistic meaning, and exploration of phenomena. Through a case study design, the relationship between parents' involvement and retention of pupils in primary schools, in Rukiga district, was explored as an exemplifying case for parents' involvement in Uganda, in their natural real-life setting. A mixed approach also

Received: 16.01.2024

Accepted: 25.01.2024

Published on: 31.01.2024

was utilized in this study, considering quantitative and qualitative research approaches. A quantitative approach was used for quantifiable information, while a qualitative approach is preferred to be used by the researcher to gather the information that may not be quantifiable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). Rukiga district an area considered for the study had the following respondents' categories suggested to provide the information required. They included; sub county chiefs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), parish chiefs, headteachers and teachers, political leaders, The total respondents' number was 27543 from whom the sample size will be selected.

A representative sample of 538 respondents was drawn from a population (N) of 273400 people in Rukiga district. To determine a representative sample from the general population, Yamane's (1967) sampling formula was used. Sampling Strategy or technique is a method that allows researchers to infer information about a population based on results from a subset of the population without having to investigate every individual. It is important to reduce the number of individuals in a study reduces the cost and workload making it easier to obtain high quality information (O'Leary, 2014). The study embraced purposive Sampling for Qualitative Approach and Simple Random Sampling for Quantitative Approach as fully explained in each of the subsequent captions. Data was analyzed in form of tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson et al., 2022)

Results

Table 1: Shows findings on whether learners drop out of school to engage in petty trade to supplement their parents' income.

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	230	45.6	45.6
Disagree	155	30.6	76.2
Not Sure	90	17.9	94.1
Agree	25	5	99.1
Strongly Agree	4	0.9	100
Total	504	100	

Source: Primary data (2023)

According to the above table majority of the respondents represented by 230(45.6%) of the respondents strongly disagreed to the statement and 155(30.6%) disagreed, 90(17.9%) were not sure, 25(5%) agreed and only 4(0.9%) strongly agreed. This indicates that majority of the respondents did not believe that most pupils drop out of school to look for income generating activities to supplement their parents' income (Oromo et al., 2023).

During interviews one of the parish chiefs revealed that; school dropout is largely attributed to other factors and is to a small extent a result of engaging in petty trade to supplement their parents' income. He argued that there is since their parents are poor where would they get capital to engage in that trade?

Most pupils drop out of school because their parents are poor and cannot afford basic needs such as food and clothes

The findings about whether most pupils drop out of school because of poverty of their parents are analyzed in table 6 below;

Table 2: Shows findings on whether most pupils drop out of school because of their parents' poverty.

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	55	10.9	10.9
Disagree	25	4.9	15.8
Not Sure	15	2.9	18.8
Agree	145	28.8	47.5
Strongly Agree	264	52.4	100
Total	504	100	

Source: Primary data (2023)

According to the above table, 55(10.9%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that most pupils drop out of school due to poverty of their parents and 25(4.9%) disagreed, 15(2.9%) were not sure, 145(28.8%) agreed and 264(52.4%) strongly agreed with the statement (Christopher & Micheal, 2022). This implies that majority of the respondents believed that poverty of the parents plays a big role in pupils' retention since it is hard for a child to go to school and concentrate on an empty stomach.

During interviews most of the respondents generally believed most pupils drop out of school because their parents' poverty since they cannot afford basic needs such as food and clothes as well as scholastic materials.

Most of the pupils drop out of school to assist taking care of their young siblings so that the parents/guardian can go to work.

The respondents were also tasked to respond to the assertion that most of the pupils drop out of school to remain with their young siblings as the parent goes to work and the findings are analyzed in the following table 3.

Table 3: Shows findings about whether most pupils drop out of school to remain with their young siblings as the parent goes to work.

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	35	6.9	6.9
Disagree	11	2.2	9.1
Not Sure	68	13.6	22.6
Agree	105	20.9	43.4
Strongly Agree	285	56.5	100

Received: 16.01.2024

Accepted: 25.01.2024

Published on: 31.01.2024

Total	504	100	
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Source: Primary Data (2023)

According to the above table, 35(6.9%) of the respondents strongly disagreed to the assertion that most of the pupils drop out of school to assist taking care of their young siblings so that the parents/guardian can go to work, 11(2.2%) disagreed, 68(13.6%) were not sure, 105(20.9%) agreed and the majority 285(56.5%) strongly agreed (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023). This clearly shows that majority of the respondents believed that parents' leaving children with their young brothers and sisters as the parents go to work to make ends meet is the highest contributor of school dropout in Rwamucucu Sub-County, Rukiga district.

With the introduction of UPE, financial status of households deters the retention of pupils of in UPE schools.

The findings about the assertion that with the introduction of UPE, the financial status of households deters the pupils' retention in UPE schools are analyzed in the following table 8.

Table 4: Shows the findings about whether with the introduction of UPE, financial status of households deters the retention of pupils in UPE schools.

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	300	59.3	59.3
Disagree	98	19.6	78.9
Not Sure	22	4.4	83.3
Agree	15	3	86.3
Strongly Agree	69	13.7	100
Total	504	100	

Source: Primary Data (2023)

According to the table above, the findings shows that majority of the respondents represented by 300(59.3%) strongly disagreed that with the introduction of UPE, the financial status parents deters pupils retention in UPE schools, 98(19.6%) disagreed, 22(4.4%) were not sure, 15(3%) agreed while 69(13.7%) strongly agreed (Richard et al., 2022). This means that majority of the respondents did not believe that pupil's retention in UPE schools was to a small extent related to financial status of the households where the pupils come from.

During the interview session most of the respondents argued that since the teachers are paid by the government there is no way the financial status of the household would deter the pupils' retention in Universal Primary Schools since the school fees payments is only done in private schools.

Though the user charges have been abolished in UPE schools, there are other “hidden costs” hindering access to education in public primary schools.

The findings about whether there are ‘hidden costs’ that hinder access to education in public primary schools in Rwamucucu Subcounty is analyzed in table 9 below.

Table 5: Shows whether there are hidden costs which hinder the access to education in public primary schools in Rwamucucu Sub-County.

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	17	3.4	3.4
Disagree	25	4.9	8.3
Not Sure	12	2.4	10.4
Agree	50	9.9	20.9
Strongly Agree	400	79.4	100
Total	504	100	

Source: Primary Data (2023)

According to the above table, 17(3.4%) strongly disagreed that there no hidden costs which deter education in UPE schools, 25(4.9%) disagreed, 12(2.4%) were not sure, 50(9.9%) agreed while the majority equivalent to 400(79.4%) strongly agreed. This implies that majority of the respondents believed that ‘hidden costs’ which are not recognized by the government that the parents and guardians are supposed to pay which are imposed by the school managements deter hinder the access to education in primary schools in public primary schools in Rwamucucu Sub-county, Rukiga District (Anthony et al., 2023).

In an interview one of political leaders said that;

“Most of the schools demand money for foundation body, building fund, report cards, exams and tests, remedial teaching among other costs which most parents and guardians cannot afford and as a result it results into school dropouts”.

Pearson product moment correlation between parents’ level of income and pupils’ retention rate.

The first hypothesis was that parents’ level of income has no significant influence on pupils’ retention. To determine the relationship, a Pearson’s correlation coefficient analysis was conducted as follows;

Table 6: Correlation for the parental level of income and pupil’s retention in Rwamucucu Sub-County-Rukiga District.

		Level of income	Pupils’ retention rate.
Parental level of income	Pearson Correlation	1	.574**

	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	504	
Pupils' retention	Pearson Correlation	.574**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.750	
	N	504	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Primary data (2023)

As in Table 6 above, the Pearson product moment correlation was applied to establish the relationship between parents' level of income and pupils' retention rate in Universal primary education schools in Rwamucucu Sub-County Rukiga District. The results above showed a positive significant relationship between parents' level of income and pupils' retention rate ($r = 0.01$, $Sig = 0.574$) (Nelson et al., 2023). The relationship is statistically significant because the calculated p-value is less than 0.01 criterion thus agrees with the hypothesis. The implication of the findings is that parents' level of income to cater for costs which are supposed to be met in UPE schools highly affects pupils' retention rate.

Correlation analysis between parental involvement and pupils' academic performance.

To determine relationship between parental involvement and pupils' retention in Universal Primary Schools of Rwamucucu Sub-County, Rukiga District, a Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted as follows;

Table 7: Shows a correlation analysis on the relationship between parental involvement and pupils' retention in public schools of Rwamucucu Sub-County.

	Parental involvement	Academic performance
Level of parental involvement	1	
Pearson Correlation		.477**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	504	504
Perceived level of academic performance	.477**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	504	504

Received: 16.01.2024

Accepted: 25.01.2024

Published on: 31.01.2024

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings presented in Table 8 above indicate the Pearson's correlation coefficient $r = .477$ between parents' involvement and pupils' academic performance as positively related. The Pearson's correlation coefficient $r = .477$ and sig.value (sig.000) indicate that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between parents' involvement and pupils' academic performance. This relationship shows that a significant change in parents' involvement leads to a significant change in pupils' academic performance. Therefore, this positive relationship between the variables confirms that parents' involvement influences pupils' academic performance of pupils in Rwamucucu Sub-County, Rukiga through participating in education activities at home, participating in education activities at school and parent-teacher communication.

Summary of the study finding

The study found a positive and significant relationship between parental level of income and learners retention rate ($r=.574^{**}$ and significance $p \text{ Sig}=0.001$). This shows that parents' level of income has something to do with pupils' retention rate in primary schools of Rwamucucu Sub-County, Rukiga District. Thus, the study findings suggest that parents' level of income has a significant relationship with pupils' retention rate. It means that if parents or care givers are able to meet the basic needs to their children such as food and clothes and meeting costs which are demanded by UPE schools such as building fund, remedial teaching, examination fees among the pupils' retention rate would be high.

Discussion of research finding

The study found a positive and significant relationship between parents' level of income and pupils' retention rate. Thus, the findings suggest that parents' income level to cater for the basic needs like food and clothes as well as provision of school needs has a significant relationship with pupils' retention rate.

Conclusion of the study

The study concludes that parental level of income plays a vital role in pupils' retention in Rwamucucu Sub-County, Rukiga district. This is because the study found out that most pupils drop out of school because their parents are poor and can hardly afford basic needs such as food and clothes. The study also concludes that, because of large family sizes, most of the pupils drop out of school to take care of their young siblings as their parents go to work.

Recommendation

As concluded in the current study that poverty affects pupils' retention, it is recommended that the government should sensitize the parents to engage in income generating activities such as commercial agriculture as opposed to subsistence farming so as to meet the basic needs like food and clothes. The parents should clearly be informed and reminded of their roles and responsibilities of always providing all the required school needs that aid in teaching and learning process of their children.

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Received: 16.01.2024

Accepted: 25.01.2024

Published on: 31.01.2024

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Received: 16.01.2024

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