
The Impact Of School Fees On Academic Excellence In Primary Schools, A Case Study Of Kyakataka

Primary School In Bugaaki Subcounty Kyenjojo District

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Abstract

The study was to examine the impact of school fees on the academic excellence of pupils in primary schools and the objectives of the study were to examine the effects of school fees on academic excellence in primary schools, to assess the causes of school fees defaulting in primary schools and to propose methods to be used on how to improve on school fees payment in primary schools. The researcher used a cross-sectional survey design. The study population was composed of head teachers, teachers, pupils and parents of Kyakataka Primary School. A sample size of 80 respondents was chosen to participate in the study, both purposive sampling and random sampling techniques were applied to obtain specific categories of respondents. Data Collection Methods used were Questionnaires and Interviews guides. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used. Basing on the findings, the study came up with the effects of school fees defaulting on academic excellence in primary schools that leads to school dropouts of pupils, reduces pupils daily attendance, de-motivates pupils and teachers in school, leads to poor service delivery, affects the supply of school scholastic materials and leads to low concentration of students towards their studies. The study further concluded the causes of school fees defaulting as poverty among families, increase of school fees by school administration, poor performance of the school in final exams, famine among families, lack of relationship between parents and school administrators and political interference. The study also concluded with the methods to be used on how to improve on school fees payment, that pupils should pack their personal requirements like lunch and breakfast, payment of school fees in installments, parents / guardians should acquire school fees loans, the school should obtain donations, the school should provide bursaries to students and increase of relationship between parents and school administration. The following recommendations were suggested from findings like lobbying funds from the Ministry of Education and Sports, establishing teachers, pupils and parent's relationship, involving parents in the school budget, training head teachers in resource mobilization skills and making more research on the impact of instructional material, educational facilities on socio-economic status of pupils, quality of admission and family background should also be conducted.

Keywords: School Fees, Academic, Excellence and Primary Schools

Background of the Study

According to (Faridah et al., 2023), more than 80 percent of its population in Uganda lives in rural areas and 35 percent lives below the poverty line. This affected education and in 1997 the Ugandan government introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program to improve primary school enrollment and achievement (Richard, 2022b). It was originally implemented to provide free education for four children per family, but the program does not follow its regulations due to the complex structure of Ugandan families. Most Ugandan families have more than

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four children, and households began to send each child, leading to a rapid increase in primary school enrollment (Mark et al., 2023). Due to the circumstances, President Museveni announced that UPE is open to all children from all families. When the new policy was introduced, schools experienced a massive influx of pupils and the demand for teaching materials, teachers and infrastructure became a challenge for the education system (Brighton et al., 2023).

Paying school fees, providing stationery and presenting in full school uniform at Kyakataro Primary School are demanding requirements for pupils to meet. School authorities set deadlines for payment of school fees and levies (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). Failure to meet these deadlines warrants suspension from classes, meals, and other important activities (Jonathan Glater, 2011). Some children fall victim to these harsh and somewhat insensitive regulations. Poor students drop out of school due to financial constraints, and the few who continue end up with poor grades in their final exams. It is against this background that the researcher intends to investigate the impact of school fees on the academic excellence of pupils in primary schools (Nelson, 2024).

Globally, the United States and the United Kingdom have come up with tuition fee policies that are large enough to make parents or guardians responsible for covering a portion of their children's higher education costs (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023). This responsibility made it difficult for low-income students to participate in formal education (Julius, 2024). In 1998, the maximum fee allowed at secondary level was increased to £9,000 from £1,000 and since then the number of students entering formal education (primary) has decreased from 14,890 to 1,345 students per year (Margaret & Kazaara, 2024).

In Pakistan, most parents provide school fees to their children to improve their academic performance (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). There are several reasons why they arrange school fees for their children. Firstly, some parents are uneducated or illiterate and secondly some parents are educated but do not have time and remain too busy to improve their economic status (Micheal et al., 2023). That is why they arrive late to their homes. It is a fact that parents spend a large part of their economy on the education of their children but are unable to take care of their academic activities. Research shows that parental involvement and participation play a vital role in increasing the educational attainment and academic excellence of their children (Suzan & Gracious Kazaara, 2023). Parents hire some tutors at home to make up for academic deficiencies and increase their children's academic abilities. For this purpose, professional tutors are appointed to tutor children at home and gradually this trend of tutoring is turning into a tradition rather an academic requirement (Julius, 2024).

(Flavia et al., 2023), access to education is one of the important basic human rights in all societies, but poverty remains a stumbling block for most people when they fail to achieve basic education fees. The lack of school fees results in an increase in early school leaving, early marriage and absenteeism in primary education and these transfers between private and public schools in developing countries (Derrick et al., 2023). The Government of

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Uganda strives to help economically disadvantaged people access education through universal primary education and universal secondary education. However, these programs cover a portion of educational expenses for students affected by poverty, with the balance remaining the responsibility of the family (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023).

Most families have always struggled with many ways to achieve a decent standard of living, but poverty poses a number of challenges to its victims, such as access to proper health facilities, education, nutrition, employment, and the realization of personal aspirations (Richard, 2022a).

Problem Statement

According to (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023) points out that school fees are associated with a number of educational disadvantages that include poor attitude to school, low academic skills, little interest in formal classes and absenteeism (Margaret & Kazaara, 2024) . The result is a lack of motivation on the part of students and teachers, leading to poor students' academic incompetence. The absence of these two aspects leads to a low level of academic achievement (UMAR & NASIRU, 2014). The literature also reveals various ways in which tuition fees negatively affect academic achievement. At Kyakatara Primary School, school fees are detrimental to academic performance and poor children go hungry at home, do not have proper uniforms and do not meet payment deadlines (Victoria et al., 2023). These problems negatively affect their learning progress.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the effects of school fees on academic excellence in primary schools.
2. To assess the causes of school fees defaulting in primary schools.
3. To propose methods to be used on how to improve school fees payment in primary schools.

Methodology

A research design is the plan which the research study follows; it is a series of advanced decisions that, taken together, make up a master plan or model for a research study (Jallow et al., 2021). It is a stated structure and process of conducting a research project, detailing a plan and method for systematically and scientifically obtaining the data to be analyzed (Olanrewaju & Abiodun, 2021).The researcher used a cross-sectional survey design. A cross-sectional survey design involves obtaining information from a wide section of respondents at once without need to follow up the respondents for further information (Jallow et al., 2022). Thus, data collection was done over a short period. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used with the view of triangulation as being appropriate for the study. Population is defined as an entire group of individuals, events, or objects having common observable characteristics (Nafiu, 2012). It is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. However, due to the large sizes of populations, researchers often cannot test every individual in the population because it is too large, expensive and time-consuming. The study population was composed of head teachers, teachers, pupils and parents of Kyakatara Primary School (Nafiu, 2012). A sample size of 80 respondents was chosen to participate in the study as shown in the table below.

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Table 1: Showing the sample size

Category	Total population	Sample size	Sampling strategy	Reason
Headteachers	01	01	Purposive	Knowledgeable about the study
Teachers	30	15	Purposive	Knowledgeable about the study
Pupils	220	50	Random	Not to bias
Parents	80	14	Random	Not to bias
Total	331	80		

Source: Field data 2023

Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used to obtain specific categories of respondents (Rasheed et al., 2022). The purpose was used because principals and teachers have knowledge in terms of administrative management systems as they play a big role in monitoring and collecting school contributions. Random sampling was used to recruit students and parents, as this technique provides everyone with participation and an equal chance to present their information to the researcher (Nafiu et al., 2017). This takes the form of a list of questions to be answered by the respondents with a justification for obtaining data on the topic under investigation. The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire that had two forms; open questions and closed questions (Nafiu et al., 2012). Closed-ended questions offered a set of alternative answers from which respondents had to choose the one that most closely matched their opinion. On the other hand, open-ended questions were followed by any choice. Thus, the answers of the respondents were recorded in full. Questionnaire was preferred because it saves time and spends little time in delivering the questionnaire from one respondent to another during data collection (Nafiu & Ph, 2012). A face-to-face interview guide was extended to students and parents to provide a brief history of the study under review. Interviews were used to ensure accurate information to allow for a deeper exploration of the study's problem. The interviews solved the problem of not understanding the questions in the questionnaires. This is because; the interviewer explains any question that the interviewee may not understand (Nafiu et al., 2013). For this research work, interview method was used to collect data so that the researcher can better understand all the issues related to the research topic. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used. This was done after data collection. The choice of these two methods was justified by the fact that different data collection tools were used. Qualitative data analysis refers to non-numerical analysis – a systematic analysis of information to arrive at some useful conclusions and recommendations (Maiga et al., 2021). Collected data were searched, sorted and edited to remove errors using SPSS & STATA (Nelson et al., 2022). During editing, the questionnaires were checked for errors, omissions and unrelated classifications, which was necessary to check the correctness and uniformity of the answers submitted by the respondents. The data collected in the field was coded to be assigned to a series of data, grouping and organizing the data for easy understanding and presentation. The coded data were entered into a

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computer using SPSS & STATA, where the data were processed into descriptive statistics to facilitate analysis (Nelson et al., 2023).

RESULTS

Table 2: Showing the effects of school's fees on the academic excellence of students in secondary schools

Response	Respondents category					
	H/trs	Trs	Pupils	Parents	Total	Percentage
Effects of school fees defaulting						
Leads to school dropout	-	03	25	07	35	44
Reduce students daily attendances	-	05	10	03	18	22
De-motivates teachers and students to learn	-	03	09	-	12	15
Leads to poor service delivery	01	02	01	04	08	10
School scholastic materials	-	01	05	-	06	08
Leads to low concentration of students towards their studies		01	-	-	01	01
Total	01	15	50	14	80	100

Source: Field data 2023

The data reveals that among the respondents, 35 individuals (44%) reported that school fee defaulting leads to school dropout. This suggests that the inability to pay school fees has a significant impact on students' ability to continue their education, resulting in them dropping out of school. Financial constraints can prevent students from accessing the necessary resources and support, leading to discontinuity in their academic journey.

Additionally, 18 respondents (22%) reported that school fee defaulting reduces students' daily attendance. This indicates that financial difficulties faced by students or their families can result in irregular attendance or even absences. The lack of consistent attendance can hinder students' learning progress, as they may miss out on important lessons and classroom interactions. Furthermore, 12 respondents (15%) reported that school fee defaulting demotivates both teachers and students to learn. Financial constraints can create a stressful environment for both teachers and students, affecting their motivation and enthusiasm for teaching and learning (Turyatamba & Turyasingura, 2024). This can have a negative impact on the overall academic atmosphere within the school. Moreover, 8 respondents (10%) reported that school fee defaulting leads to poor service delivery. The inability to pay school fees can limit the availability of resources and infrastructure necessary for providing quality education. Insufficient funds can result in inadequate facilities, outdated teaching materials, and a lack of support services, negatively impacting the overall learning experience (David et al., 2023).

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Additionally, 6 respondents (8%) reported that school fee defaulting affects the availability of school scholastic materials. This suggests that financial constraints can hinder the provision of essential learning materials, such as textbooks, stationery, and other resources required by students to actively engage in their studies (Racheal et al., 2023). Furthermore, 1 respondent (1%) reported that school fee defaulting leads to low concentration of students towards their studies. Financial challenges can create distractions and worries for students, making it difficult for them to focus and concentrate on their academic endeavors.

The causes of school fees defaulting in primary schools.

The study also obtained views from the field on what causes school fees defaulting among pupil's schools and these were pointed out as shown in the table below.

Table 3: Showing the causes of school fees defaulting in primary schools.

Response	Respondents category					
Causes of school fess defaulting	H/trs	Trs	Pupils	Parents	Total	Percentage
Poverty among families	01	03	20	-	24	30
Increasing school fees by the school administration	-	03	10	07	20	25
Poor performance of the school in final exams discourages parents	-	02	10	05	17	21
Famine among families	-	03	05	-	08	10
Lack of strong relationship between parents and school administration	-	02	04	-	06	08
Political interference	-	02	01	02	05	06
Total	01	15	50	14	80	100

Source: Field data 2023

According to the table, the respondents were categorized as Headteachers (H/trs), Teachers (Trs), Pupils, and Parents. The study sought to obtain views from the field on the causes of school fee defaulting, as identified by these categories.

The data reveals that among the respondents, 24 individuals (30%) pointed out poverty among families as a significant cause of school fee defaulting. This suggests that financial constraints resulting from poverty make it difficult for families to meet the financial obligations of school fees. Families facing poverty may struggle to provide the necessary funds for their children's education, leading to defaulting on school fees (Sub-county et al., 2023).

Additionally, 20 respondents (25%) reported that increasing school fees by the school administration contributes to school fee defaulting. This indicates that when schools raise their fees, it can create a financial burden for parents, making it challenging for them to afford the increased costs. The inability to keep up with the higher fees can result in school fee defaulting.

Furthermore, 17 respondents (21%) mentioned that the poor performance of the school in final exams discourages parents from paying school fees. This suggests that parents may question the value of paying fees if they perceive that the school's academic outcomes are not satisfactory. The lack of confidence in the school's ability to deliver quality education can lead to parents defaulting on school fees (Nelson, 2024). Moreover, 8 respondents (10%) identified famine among families as a cause of school fee defaulting. This indicates that during periods of food scarcity or economic hardship, families may prioritize meeting their basic needs over paying school fees. The lack of resources due to famine can directly impact families' ability to fulfill their financial obligations to the school.

Additionally, 6 respondents (8%) mentioned that the lack of a strong relationship between parents and the school administration contributes to school fee defaulting. This suggests that when there is a lack of effective communication, trust, or collaboration between parents and the school, it can result in misunderstandings or disagreements regarding the payment of fees. This breakdown in the relationship can lead to parents defaulting on school fees (Gracious, 2023). Furthermore, 5 respondents (6%) pointed out political interference as a cause of school fee defaulting. This indicates that external factors, such as political instability or interference, can disrupt the financial stability of families and the functioning of schools. Political unrest or interference may result in economic instability, making it difficult for parents to fulfill their financial obligations towards school fees.

Methods to be used on how to improve on school fees payment in primary schools.

From the findings, respondents were able to reveal some of the methods that could be used to improve on school fees payments in primary schools as presented in the table below.

Table 4: showing Methods to be used on how to improve on school fees payment

Response	Respondents category					
	H/trs	Trs	Pupils	Parents	Total	Percentage
Methods used to improve on school fees payments in secondary schools						
Packing for students requirements like food and break tea	-	07	10	03	20	25
Payment installments	-	-	15	04	19	24
Acquiring school fees loans by parents /guardians	-	03	10	03	16	20

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Obtaining and lobby donations from government and NGOs	01	03	10	02	16	20
Provision of school fees bursaries	-	-	05	01	06	07
Increasing parents an school administration relationship	-	02	-	01	03	04
Total	01	15	50	14	80	100

Source: Field data 2023

The data reveals that among the respondents, 20 individuals (25%) mentioned packing for students' requirements like food and break tea as a method to improve school fees payments. This suggests that providing essential amenities such as meals and snacks to students can alleviate the financial burden on parents and encourage them to fulfill their school fees obligations. By incorporating such provisions into the school system, it becomes easier for parents to manage their expenses and prioritize school fees payment (Jallow et al., 2021).

Additionally, 19 respondents (24%) highlighted payment installments as a method to enhance school fees payments. This indicates that allowing parents to pay fees in installments rather than as a lump sum can make it more manageable for them to fulfill their financial obligations. By providing flexible payment options, parents can better budget their finances and ensure timely payment of school fees. Furthermore, 16 respondents (20%) suggested that acquiring school fees loans by parents or guardians could be an effective approach to improving school fees payments. This implies that offering access to loans specifically designed for school fees can assist parents in meeting their financial obligations. Such loans can provide temporary financial support and enable parents to pay fees promptly, reducing the instances of default.

Moreover, 16 respondents (20%) mentioned obtaining and lobbying for donations from government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as a method to enhance school fees payments. This suggests that seeking external financial support through donations can help alleviate the financial burden on parents and improve the payment of school fees. By establishing partnerships and collaborations with relevant stakeholders, schools can secure additional resources to support families in paying fees. Additionally, 6 respondents (7%) highlighted the provision of school fees bursaries as a method to improve school fees payments. This indicates that offering financial assistance in the form of bursaries can be beneficial in supporting families who are facing financial hardships. By providing targeted assistance to those in need, schools can ensure that no child is denied access to education due to financial constraints.

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Furthermore, 3 respondents (4%) mentioned increasing the relationship between parents and the school administration as a method to improve school fees payments. This suggests that fostering strong communication, trust, and collaboration between parents and the school can positively impact the payment of school fees. By creating a supportive and engaging environment, parents may feel more motivated to fulfill their financial obligations towards school fees.

Conclusion

Basing on the findings, the study came up with the effects of school fees defaulting on academic excellence in primary schools that leads to school dropouts of pupils, reduces students daily attendance, de-motivates students and teachers in school, leads to poor service delivery, affects the supply of school scholastic materials and leads to low concentration of students towards their studies.

The study further concluded the causes of school fees defaulting in primary schools as poverty among families, increase of school fees by school administration, poor performance of the school in final exams, famine among families, lack of relationship between parents and school administrators and political interference.

The study also concluded with the methods to be used on how to improve on school fees payment in primary schools that pupils should pack their personal requirements like lunch and breakfast, payment of school fees in installments, parents / guardians should acquire school fees loans, the school should obtain donations, the school should provide bursaries to students and increase of relationship between parents and school administration

Recommendations

The researcher made the following recommendations from the findings and discussions as below;

School administrators should lobby from the Ministry of Education and Sports in order to obtain the financial aid so as to enhance their managerial roles more effectively which results into positive academic excellence.

School administrators, Teachers students and parent's relationship should be more exposed to the use of school fees in order to develop a culture on how to pay school fees that is used to pay teachers' salaries and hence academic excellence.

Head teachers should involve and parents in the school budget to provide essential facilities like electricity, running water, laboratory and library facilities, which will improve on the learning environment. This motivates parents to pay school fees since they are aware of the school program to provide essential facilities.

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