
Poverty And Academic Performance Of Primary School Pupils In Kyenjoo Town Council, Kyenjojo District.

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Abstract

This research investigates the relationship between poverty and academic performance among primary school pupils, with a focus on understanding the multifaceted impact of socioeconomic disadvantage on educational outcomes. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of academic data with qualitative insights gathered through interviews and observations, the quantitative aspect involves the collection and examination of academic performance data from primary schools in diverse socio-economic settings. Standardized test scores, attendance records, and other relevant academic metrics are analyzed to identify correlations between poverty levels and academic achievement. Additionally, demographic factors such as parental education, household income, and access to educational resources are considered, qualitative data is gathered through interviews with primary school teachers, administrators, and parents, providing a nuanced understanding of the contextual challenges faced by pupils in low-income households. Observations within school environments aim to identify specific barriers to learning that may be associated with poverty, such as inadequate resources, limited parental involvement, and psychosocial stressors, the research aims to contribute to the existing literature by offering insights into the intricate interplay between poverty and academic performance. By exploring the challenges faced by pupils in economically disadvantaged households, educators and policymakers can gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence learning outcomes. This knowledge can inform the development of targeted interventions and support systems to mitigate the impact of poverty on academic achievement, ultimately promoting more equitable educational opportunities for all primary school pupils.

Keywords: Poverty, Pupils, Academic Performance and Primary School

Background of the study

Poverty is the current world's greatest threat to peace and stability more than terrorism and other highly publicized struggles (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023). According to (Sachs, 2005), more than eight million people die worldwide every year because they are too poor to stay alive. Their plight is hardly articulated because the public hardly comments on it (Christopher, Muhindo, et al., 2022). The poorest of the poor currently make up about a sixth of humanity. They live in extreme poverty and struggle daily to survive. In 2001, the World Bank estimated that roughly 1.1 billion people lived in extreme poverty, from 1.5 billion to 198 liters. Of these people, about 93% live in the three counties; East Asia, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Vincent & Peter, 2023). Poverty is on the rise in sub-Saharan Africa, while it is declining in East Asia and South Asia. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, almost half of the population is believed to be living in extreme poverty and this proportion is increasing over time (Faridah et al., 2023).

It grows widely in Uganda. In 1994, the Welfare Monitoring Survey estimated the poverty index to be around 47.2%, while in 2004 it was estimated to be around 56% (Faith et al., 2023). This is against the commitment of the Government of Uganda at the time of independence in 1963 to combat illiteracy, disease, ignorance and poverty in order to eradicate them and achieve sustainable development (Frank et al., 2023). The poverty reduction policy was outlined in Working Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Uganda (Justus, n.d.). Several national development plans, meeting papers, presidential commissions, task forces and studies in Uganda have sometimes addressed the issue of poverty (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara et al., 2023). So far, poverty is still a challenge and is recognized as a major threat to a very significant part of Ugandan society including education. The objective of this study was therefore to determine the effects of poverty on the academic performance of students in Kyenjojo Town Council, Primary Schools in Kyenjojo District (Victoria et al., 2023).

Statement of the problem

In recent years, there has been increasing concern about the impact of poverty on the academic performance of primary school students (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). Despite efforts to improve educational outcomes, a significant number of students, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, continue to experience persistent challenges that hinder their academic success (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023).

The link between poverty and academic performance is a complex and multifaceted issue (Micheal et al., 2023). Students from low-income families often face barriers that extend beyond the classroom, including limited access to educational resources, inadequate nutrition, and a lack of socioeconomic support (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023). These challenges may contribute to the persistent achievement gap among primary school students, which perpetuates educational inequalities. Understanding the specific mechanisms through which poverty affects academic performance is critical to developing effective interventions and policies (Winny et al., 2023). However, there is currently a lack of comprehensive analysis of factors linking poverty to academic achievement in the context of primary education (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). This research aims to address this gap by examining the nuanced relationships between poverty and academic performance in elementary school students (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022).

Specific objectives

1. To determine the profile of the respondents in regard to, Social demographic data, Age, Gender and academic level
2. To determine the effects of poverty on academic performance of learners in Kyenjojo town council, primary schools, Kyenjojo district.
3. To examine the role of the community in alleviating poverty and improving education in Kyenjojo town council, primary schools, Kyenjojo district.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design since the study was about explaining a scenario or an event. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to collect and analyze data on the parenthood practices. The study was carried out in Kyenjojo town council, primary schools, Kyenjojo district, Uganda. The study involved students, teachers and parents. A total of seventy respondents were used from the total population of the schools which will be used for this study as illustrated by the table 1

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Table 1: Categories of Sample

Categories of Respondents	Sample
Teachers	15
Students	40
Parents	20
Total	75

Source: Primary data, 2024

Using a suitable sampling technique, a total of seventy respondents were randomly selected to participate in this study. While conducting the research, the researcher first received a dismissal letter from the course administrators, which the researcher took to the schools under study. The researcher then received permission from the authority to access information from the school (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). These were used to collect information from some pupils as these respondents are literate and able to understand the language used. Interviews were conducted with teachers and parents because they are busy and do not have time to answer the questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with teachers and parents because they are busy and do not have time to answer the questionnaires. Qualitative data included three sets of activities that included editing, coding, and frequency tables (Sub-county et al., 2023). Editing was done by reviewing each of the field responses from the questionnaires and interview guides, ensuring that every applicable question had an answer and any errors were removed for completeness, accuracy, and consistency. The researcher then proceeded to code different responses to specific questions that lacked coding frames, and then identified the number of times each category of alternative responses received a response using the tallied marks, which were later totaled. Data were analyzed by tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson et al., 2022).

RESULTS

Table 2: Provision of school facilities

	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
1	We have enough text books	30%	12%	58%
2	We have enough classrooms	36%	10%	54%
3	Practical materials are enough	33%	7%	60%
4	We have all the necessary laboratories	44%	4%	51%

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5	All pupils have school uniforms	40%	4%	51%
6	We have enough chairs and black boards	50%	20%	30%

Source: Primary data 2024

The table above shows that 58% disagree that they have enough text books, 54% said they did not have enough classrooms, 60% said the practical materials were not enough, 51 % do not have the necessary laboratories, and school uniforms and 30% do not have enough chairs and blackboards. These all naturally affect the academic performance of students. In interviews held with the teachers they revealed that lack of these facilities led to children performing poorly since they did not have what to use to study.

Table 3: Less staff development and training opportunities

	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
1	We have few teachers	31%	9%	40%
2	We have few trained teachers	59%	19%	22%
3	Classes are large for the teachers	60%	10%	30%
4	We do not understand anything since the classes are large	51%	4%	44%
5	Teachers do not teach all lessons since they are few	54%	14%	30%
6	Because teachers are less paid they get frustrated	57%	7%	36%

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	and don't teach well			

Source: primary data 2024

The table shows that 31 % strongly agree that they have few teachers, 59%have few trained teachers, 60% have large classes, 51 % do not understand anything since the classes are large, and 54% say teachers do not teach all subjects since they are few and 57%say that teachers do not teach well due to frustrations. These are all effects of poverty which affect the academic perfo1mance of the students (Richard et al., 2023). According to the teachers they are less paid and yet they handle large classes and teach for many hours. They also revealed that they had less training and this so because they did not have funds to cater for their training.

Table 4: Poor nutrition, feeding habits and poor health among pupils in schools

	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
1	We have feeding programs at school	20%	30%	50%
2	The diet is balanced	10%	20%	70%
3	We eat all necessary meals and well prepared	40%	20%	40%
4	the school environment is clean and disease free	45%	5%	50%
5	The school has good health facilities	30%	15%	55%
6	Few students fall sick	10%	40%	50%

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Source: Primary Data 2024

The table above shows that 50% do not have feeding programs, 70% do not eat a balanced diet, 40% do not eat all the necessary meals, 50% are in a school environment that is not safe and could fall sick any time while 55% say the schools do not have good health facilities and 50% say that most students fall sick at school. According to the pupils the meal prepared was always posho and beans and it was not well prepared. they revealed that those who came from rich families could afford to buy whatever they wanted to eat but those who came from poor families had no choice than to eat what the school prepared even though it was not good (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). The teachers who also ate the same food provided for the students admitted that the food was not well prepared bit they also had no choice to eat the food. The headmaster revealed that the food was not well prepared because of lack of funds to buy the necessary ingredients for the food. All these are barriers to academic performance.

Table 5: Increased School Dropouts

Item Description		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
1	Most pupils drop out due to poverty	70%	20%	10%
2	Children have to work at home before they come to school and hence perform poorly, leading to poor performance and hence drop out.	59%	19%	22%
3	The school environment is not good due to poverty and hence students drop out	60%	10%	30%
4	Children do not have food to eat and study when hungry, yet they do not understand and hence drop out	60%	15%	25%
5	The distances from home to school are long, and pupils reach school tired and cannot concentrate in class, which leads to school drop out	50%	20%	30%
6	Parents are poor and therefore their daughters drop out of school to get married so that they are paid dowry.	40%	5%	55%

Source: Primary Data 2024

This table presents data on factors perceived to contribute to rising school dropout rates. Regarding item 1, a strong majority of 70% agreed that most pupils drop out due to poverty, as impoverished families cannot afford educational expenses. For item 2, 59% strongly agreed that children having to work at home before school leads to poor performance and subsequent dropping out due to lack of time dedicated to studies. Concerning item 3, 60% strongly felt the school environment itself suffers from poverty, further discouraging continued enrollment. Item 4 saw 60% strongly agreeing that hungry children struggling without food have difficulty studying and tend to drop out. Related to item 5, long travel distances were considered another root cause by 50%, who strongly agreed that tiredness prevents concentration in class. Item 6 received less strong agreement, with 40% believing early marriage for dowry payments drives girls to dropout. The percentages agreeing or dissenting provide an indication of perspectives on these issues. In summary, the data suggests widespread poverty, through its various hardships and pressures, underlies increasing dropouts by making consistent attendance and academic success unfeasible for many impoverished youth.

Conclusion

Education is widely accepted as the main exit route from poverty. It is the backbone of growth and development of individuals and the nation. However, its achievement continues to elude many Ugandans who are poverty stricken. This has perpetuated the vicious circle of poverty so much that the gap between the rich and the poor has kept on widening as the extreme poor are denied access to education.

Equally access to quality education among some of the poor has constantly been affected by poverty in that some access education that is marred by lack of the right instructional facilities and equipment, poor processes of delivery, inconducive and unattractive learning environments etc .

These render them too uncompetitive in the job market. However, the efforts by the Government of Uganda to avail educational opportunities to the poor are welcome especially the proposed tuition waiver in secondary schools. Because this will not fully solve the problem of the poor in accessing secondary, the educational stake holder should further augment government efforts in financing education.

Recommendation

School leaders should embrace school-based management and develop the knowledge base associated with efficiency and effectiveness in school management for the purposes of achieving the educational goals for the learners. Owing to the effects of poverty in provision of education, school governing structures should strategize on the school aspects which need more emphasis compared to others to meet the expectations and interests of the most important constituent the pupils.

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