
The Effects Of School Location On Learner's Academic Performance In Kyarusenzi Sub County Kyenjojo District

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Abstract

The study set to determine the extent to which distance affected the academic achievement of pupils in community Primary schools in Kyarusenzi Sub County. The study was guided by four specific objectives, which were carried out through descriptive cross-sectional study design. Data were collected using semi- structured interview guide, questionnaires and documentary review, by involving 12 teachers, two educational officers, and 200 (80 boys and 120 girls) pupils. These study respondents were sampled through simple random and purposive sampling technique in which SPSS and inductive analysis procedures were employed to analyze their responses. The study determined that longer distance travelled by pupils to school made them reach schools late and with empty stomachs. The 2024 national examination results from these five schools were obtained from the district education office. Classroom observations and interviews were also conducted with 20 teachers and administrators. The data revealed that no learners from the remote schools scored in the highest academic divisions, with failure rates found to be significantly higher compared to national averages. It was evident from the study that long walking distances over difficult terrain frequently left students exhausted, impacting their ability to focus in class. The findings demonstrated the imperative for education policymakers to consider how school placement can unintentionally disadvantage marginalized learner populations.

Keywords: School Location, Learner's, Academic and Performance

Background of the study

Demand for primary education (PE) is increasing as more countries move towards achieving universal primary education (UPE) (Anthony et al., 2023). In 2005, about 512 million students were enrolled in primary schools worldwide, an increase of more than 73 million since 1999 (Mark et al., 2023). A similar increase in primary school enrollment occurred in Tanzania between (2000) and (2011) as observed by (Suzan & Gracious Kazaara, 2023). The rapid expansion of primary schools in Tanzania resulted from increased societal demand for primary education brought about by the implementation of universal primary education announced in the 1970s and later in the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) of 2002 (Moses, 2023). . The expansion of primary education (PE) has created a demand for post-PE, which requires an adequate supply of teachers and an adequate learning environment in primary schools as an increased incentive to complete primary school (Christopher et al., 2022). In order to address the need for access to and completion of primary education, in some regions of Tanzania and specifically in Kyarusenzi, consideration of the location of community primary schools has not been critically addressed in advance (Faith et al., 2023). The establishment of primary schools did not consider factors that could contribute to high quality education for better academic results, especially the travel distance of students and teachers to and from school (John et al., 2023). Expanding enrollment through more schools close to people was a major step towards universalizing education, as eligible students would have access to schools and participate in all scheduled school activities (Kalikula, 2023). The location of primary schools in different countries is widely dispersed from the homesteads of pupils. As a result, longer walking or traveling distance from home to school/college mostly affected students, especially girls (Anthony et al., 2023).

Long distance has conflicting results among researchers regarding academic performance (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). It

is commonly argued that longer distance to school reduces students' ability to focus their attention during studies due to long walks or late arrival to class (Richard et al., 2023). In some cases, due to traveling long distances without provision of transport, pupils are trapped in unhealthy sexual behaviors that could not be triggered if they walked reasonable distances to and from school (Godfrey et al., 2023). This study presents some of the schools in Kyarusozi district, their distance from the village center as well as their national examination results. Table 1 illustrates the five schools and their estimated distances from village centers

Table 1: Locations of Community Primary Schools in Kyarusozi sub county and Academic Performance

School	Distance	Year	Performance in division					Regional rank	National rank
			I	II	III	IV	Fail		
Nsinde	05km	2011	01	03	04	62	102	124/188	1874/3198
		2012	01	05	07	58	94	74/207	966/3396
		2013	02	03	21	42	80	50/81	1756/3256
Barahijja	6.5km	2011	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		2012	-	03	04	54	101	132/207	1432/3396
		2013	01	05	06	37	66	60/81	20067/3256
Kanyabacope	05km	2011	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		2012	-	-	-	-	-	--	-
		2013	03	06	25	73	43	26/81	883/3256
Kaisamba	07km	2011	0	01	07	58	94	130/188	1911/3108
		2012	0	0	03	22	110	199/207	2817/3396
		2013	0	0	08	38	45	67/81	2214/3256

Table 1 shows that community Primary schools which are located closer to the residential areas, performed well compared to their distant counterparts. Specifically, Barahijja Primary school attained poor results than other community school (Faith et al., 2023). This could be due to the long distance, which pupils have to cover to reach the school which is longer than other schools. In this school, most of the pupils use bicycles as means of transport. In addition, because of longer walking distance, some pupils at Kaisamba Primary school have dropped out of school as use of bicycles made them tired thereby, losing an opportunity to sit for their Form four national examinations (Cand et al., 2022). The opposite was true for Nsinde Primary school where most of pupils were staying at school and they were doing well in the National Examinations (Richard, 2022). This situation prompted the researcher to look for a scientific explanation with regard to pupils' massive failure.

Statement of the Problem

There are several efforts that have been made to ensure that SE offers quality learning (Emmanuel et al., 2023). Such efforts include the introduction of the Tanzania Education and Vocational Training Policy 1995 and the 2014 Policy (Victoria et al., 2023) to guide the provision of education at all levels, the Education Sector Development Programs 2010-

2015 (MOEVT, 2010) and more. policy-related guidelines (Frank et al., 2023). However, the performance of some community primary schools in national examinations remains low in Kyarusozi DISTRICT. This has raised some questions about their poor performance in relation to their location, hence this study (Emmanuel et al., 2023). The investigation was deemed appropriate because without it, schools would continue as they were without improving student performance and would jeopardize national efforts to have qualified and competent citizens (Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the extent to which school location affects the academic achievement of Primary school pupils in Kyarusozi sub county,
2. To find out factors that determined location of community Primary schools in Kyarusozi sub county,
3. To determine conditions used to allocate pupils to Primary schools, and
4. Appropriate strategies to improve Primary school pupils` performance.

Methodology

Research design refers to all the procedures chosen by the researcher to study a particular set of questions (Olanrewaju & Abiodun, 2021). It is a plan showing how the researcher would conduct the research to obtain relevant data that fulfills the research objectives. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used in this study (Anwar et al., 2022). This design was considered appropriate because it allows data to be collected to study issues that are comparative in nature between different group attributes, but at a single point in time (Maiga et al., 2021).

The aim of this study was to obtain rich data on the effect of school location on student academic performance in selected community primary schools in Kyarusozi District (Olanrewaju et al., 2021b). In this study, data were collected from students, school principals, district supervisors, and parents. For pupils, data was collected using questionnaires, each student answered a question according to their understanding of the problem (Aslam et al., 2022). Data to parents were collected through direct interview and questionnaires about how long distance affects their children's academic level, also data from school principals and district school officials were collected through direct interview (Lu et al., 2013). A population is any group of individuals that have one or more common characteristics that are of interest to the researcher (Best & Kahn, 2006). The population for this study included all community primary school students, teachers, community primary school principals, district school officials and community members from selected community primary schools in Kyarusozi District. Among the 12 primary schools, five primary schools were involved in the study (Olanrewaju et al., 2021b). A sampling technique is a tactic used to select a sample for study. The sample should be carefully selected because through such selection the researcher is able to determine the main characteristics required from the population (Nafiu & Ph, 2012). In this research, purposive sampling and simple random sampling were used to obtain research participants. The use of purposive sampling technique was entirely aimed at obtaining rich and reliable data from selected specific respondents (Olanrewaju et al., 2021a). Respondents purposively sampled included DEOs, principals of general primary schools and parents. The selection of these respondents was done using

the purposive sampling technique, because they are the ones who are involved in the students' learning in one way or another on a daily basis (Olanrewaju et al., 2021b). In addition, DEOs in Kyarusozi DISTRICT were purposively selected as they are responsible for ensuring effective delivery of education in their respective administrative areas including Kyarusozi DISTRICT (Olanrewaju et al., 2021a). On the other hand, parents/legal representatives of the pupils of the involved Primary School community were targeted to share their experiences with the impact of school location on academic results (Emmanuel et al., 2023). A purposive sampling technique was used for students who travel more than 12 kilometers to and from home/school because it is distance that affects their academic performance (Faith et al., 2023).

In this research, the sample consisted of five community elementary schools. This number of primary schools was sufficient for the purpose of the study as those involved could share their accumulated experiences of learning in school and the related effects of longer walking distance to school (Julius, 2024). This number of schools allowed the researcher to recruit a total of 200 pupils (40 from each school), 8 primary school teachers, 40 parents/guardians and 2 teaching staff (Nelson, 2024). There are two sources of data that are used in field research. Brodeur, Israel, and Craig (2014) categorize such data sources into two; primary and primary data sources. (Nafiu et al., 2012) differentiates between primary and primary data and argues that primary data involves massive data collection and analysis in which the researcher is directly involved through focus groups, surveys, interviews, observations and tests. Meanwhile, primary sources include data collection from government agencies (Nafiu, 2012). Such government agencies may also have collected such data from non-governmental organizations or individuals. This study collected data from government officials (educational worker and teachers) using both primary and secondary data sources, namely the study collected data through interviews, document review, questionnaire and focus groups (Nafiu, 2012).

An interview is a planned set of questions that are asked between the researcher and the respondents through verbal communication (face to face) or mediated by technology such as mobile phone conversation and social media such as twitter, facebook book (Jallow et al., 2022).). There are three methods that can be used when conducting an interview between the researcher and the respondents. These methods were divided by (Nafiu et al., 2017) into structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Due to the nature of this study, a semi-structured interview was used as it allows the collection of significant in-depth data.

(Nafiu et al., 2017) describes a questionnaire as a type of survey method, which is a data collection method involving a measurement process in which respondents are asked questions in a small number of people representing a large number of people. Questionnaire is the most widely used data collection technique that provides an efficient way to collect responses from a large sample before quantitative analysis (Nafiu et al., 2017). It works better with standardized questions that can be confidently interpreted in the same way by all respondents (Robson, 2002). The data analysis procedure involves organizing data in a way that allows researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop expectations and create interpretations, critique or generate theories (Nafiu et al., 2013). Both qualitative and quantitative data were subjected to data analysis by the producers to determine their significance. Qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews were subjected to a process of inductive data analysis.

The procedure allows data to be analyzed according to a specific objective before a broad picture is formed from the data (Anwar et al., 2022). The procedure involves describing information, condensing these data into categories or themes for valid conclusions and interpretation (Nafiu et al., 2017). On the other hand, the data that was collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using a windows program called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 (Nelson et al., 2022). These data are presented in the form of graphs and tables. Furthermore, data collected through documents (national and annual

RESULTS

Table 2: National Examination Results for Pupils Walking Beyond Six Kilometers to and from the School

School	Division I	Division II	Division III	Division IV	Fail	Total
Nsinde	-	-	-	20	21	41
Barahijja	-	-	-	11	12	23
Kanyabacope	-	-	-	12	07	19
Kaisamba	-	-	-	22	29	51
Kyongera	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	65	69	134

Source: Fieldwork (2015)

The results as presented on Table 2 indicates clearly that longer walking distance to and from the school, have affected pupils' academic attainment in their terminal and National examinations. Most of pupils who walk beyond six kilometers were found to perform poorly in their National Examinations. It could also be observed from the Table 2 that no student who stayed further from school, attained division one to division three as all performed at division four and some totally failed.

Sometimes, failure of pupils to complete previously given home-works put them in crisis with the subject masters. Pupils held the view that longer distance to school impacted their academic achievement as was expected by subject masters, parents, and pupils themselves. One of academic master from Maguvani Primary school shared the view arguing that longer distance impacted pupils' moral behaviors and perseverance to learning activities, hence poor performance to both internal and national examinations. The academic master added that some of such pupils who used to walk longer distance were bright but they have turned down to be among the poor performers in their class activities and examinations as well.

Table 3 illustrates the positive effect of shorter distance to and from the schools on academic performance.

Table 3: National Examination Results for Pupils who stay in Hostel or Near School Environment

School	Division I	Division	Division	Division	Fail	Total
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		II	III	IV		
Nsinde	01	03	-	-	-	04
Barahijja	01	-	09	-	-	10
Kanyabacope	-	-	04	-	-	04
Kaisamba	-	01	06	-	-	07
Kyongera	12	29	-	-	-	41
Total	14	33	19	-	-	66

Source: Fieldwork (2015)

One academic master of the involved schools was in favor of construction of hostels for pupils to stay at school and concentrate with schooling other than being interfered with non-academic issues.. Figure 1 illustrates bicycles parked at one of the common tree at one of the community Primary schools in Kyarusenzi sub county. Bicycles served as major means of transport used by pupils to make them reach schools early.

Figure 1: Bicycles as the Most Common Means of Transport used by Pupils

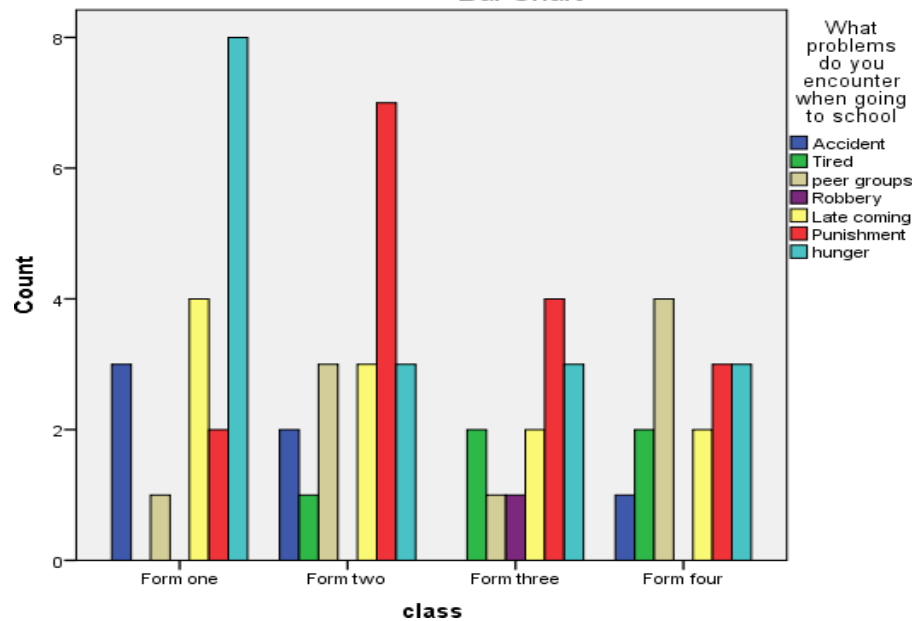


Source: Fieldwork (2015)

As it could be observed on Figure 1, bicycles have served as the most economical transport mean to make pupils reach their schools and return home easily. Though it could be considered that bicycles were the affordable means of transport, yet some pupils did not manage to have one. This indicates that a huge number of pupils who stayed far from their schools used their foot as the means of transport to reach schools.

Assertions made by pupils on the distance they travelled to and from school, this study explored from pupils about problems they encountered because of longer walking distance to school. Such problems were determined through the use of questionnaire and their responses are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Problems Encountered by Pupils as they Walk to and from School
Bar Chart



A Figure 2 illustrates, several problems identified to face pupils. Form one pupils identified hunger and late coming as serious problems they faced, whereas form two pupils had different responses. They identified punishment, late coming and peer groups as major problems they encountered. Meanwhile, the form three and form four pupils categorized punishment and hunger as common problems they faced though peer groups appeared to be high among the form four pupils.

It could be deduced from Figure 2 that across classes; hunger, lateness, punishment, peer pressure and tiredness emerged through careful analysis as major problems impacting pupils. Because of their lateness to school, pupils reported being punished by teachers which made them loose interest and concentration to school sessions. Such lose of interest and concentration to school resulted through psychological and mental disturbance caused by punishment.

Appropriate Strategies to Improve Pupils' Academic Performance

Better academic results are the expectations of the nation, parents and pupils. To achieve excellence in academics, involvement of stakeholders and other resources has been a claim of several educational literatures in the world. In determining measures to be employed by educational authorities in collaboration with community members to better pupils' academic achievement, the study involved educational officers, teachers and parents. Semi-structured interviews were employed as data collection method to the specified respondents.

Respondents proposed an increased number of Primary schools, collective involvement of key stakeholders (government, non-governmental organizations- NGO's, and community members), increased efforts in constructing teachers' houses, locating schools around social services, and short and long-term plans in constructing hostels as major measures to improve school environments for effective teaching and learning.

Education Officer informed that improvement of student's results would be possible by reducing longer travelling distance by increasing the number of Primary schools in Kyarusenzi sub county.

According to the District Academic Officer in Kyarusenzi sub county, factors for poor performance of learners in Kyarusenzi sub county included poor living environment for teachers. This problem made most of the teachers to hire houses which could accommodate their families far from schools. Consequently, many teachers arrived at their respective schools late affecting their preparation and implementation of their plans in classrooms. The educational officer clarified that such teachers solicited some houses far from their schools because in some places there were no adequate social services such as hospitals, markets and electricity around schools.

Table 4: National Examination Results for Pupils Walking beyond Six Kilometers to and from the School

School	ision I	ision II	ision III	ision IV	Fail	Total
Nsinde	-	-	-	20	21	41
Barahijja	-	-	-	11	12	23
Kanyabacope	-	-	-	12	07	19
Kaisamba	-	-	-	22	29	51
Kyongera	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	65	69	134

Source: Fieldwork (2015)

This table presents data collected during fieldwork in 2015 on the national examination performance of pupils from five

schools who had to walk over six kilometers each way daily between their homes and their place of schooling. The data is broken down by divisional scores as well as failures in the national exams administered that year.

Across all five schools - Nsinde, Barahijja, Kanyabacope, Kaisamba and Kyongera - there were no pupils who scored in Divisions I, II or III, indicating no students from these long-distance walking cohorts achieved the highest levels of passing grades. The majority of scores were recorded in Division IV, considered a basic pass, with Nsinde having 20, Barahijja 11 and Kanyabacope and Kaisamba having 12 and 22 pupils respectively in this category.

Notably, failure rates were also high across the schools, with Nsinde recording 21 failures, Barahijja 12 failures and Kaisamba 29 failures out of their total students represented. Overall, 65 pupils achieved the lower Division IV pass while 69 failed the exams altogether out of the total 134 long-distance walking students captured in the dataset.

This suggests long travel distances may negatively impact academic performance, with no high achievers and above average failure rates recorded amongst these students facing significant daily transportation challenges just to attend classes.

Conclusion

The location of Primary schools depends on the availability of the open land for various school socio-economic activities. Therefore, it is equally important that Primary schools in Uganda be given enough land to allow schools to establish on their free will various structures and activities in their given land. To make this possible, educational stakeholder (parents, Educational supervisors and politicians) should work cooperatively and wisely to make the school environment attractive for both pupils and teachers. Given that stakeholders identified different criteria they used to allocate pupils into various Primary schools, consideration on the pupils' ability to reach their schools is necessary. This would reduce claims that pupils do walk or travel longer to reach schools while being tempted differently on the way to school or home. These would potentially serve the pupils from poor families who do not afford to hire transport or buy their bicycles to help them reach schools earlier.

Recommendations

This study recommends three aspects based on study findings: Such recommendations are based on policy, practices and further research. In order to improve student's academic performance, it was suggested that there should be more efforts to build new Primary schools in Kyarusozi Sub County to sub county with high population growth. Construction of other schools and the rehabilitation or expansion of the existing schools would enable schools to have enough capacity to absorb pupils. Through increased school capacity to absorb many pupils would reduce dispersing teachers in schools which in the end schools remain with few teachers and inadequate infrastructures.

The other strategy was the establishment of schools close to the social services like transport facilities and electricity in Primary schools which have difficulty living conditions like Nsinde and Kyongera to motivate teachers to reside around school premises. Hence solve the problem of late coming to school to both teachers and pupils.

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