
Religion On Students' Academic Performance In Secondary Schools In Rural Areas; A Case Of Gombe

Town Council Butambala District

Kulabako Victoria¹, Babirye Shamirah²

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract

This qualitative study assessed the impact of religion on students' academic performance. The study employed a descriptive research design with a population size of respondents of 138 who were selected from students, teachers, non-teaching staff and school leaders in Gombe town council Butambala district. The study was guided by the sacred theory which states that religion is basically a searching sacredness that is defined by discovery, conservation and transformation. Individuals involved in religion always act at discovering new things in life. The study was derived basing on three objectives; (i) to examine the effect of attending church/mosque services / Mass/ Juma on the motivation of students towards learning, (ii) to examine the effect of attending religious lessons on students' performance in religious subjects (iii) to establish the relationship between religiosity and students' academic performance in their national examination results and the results shows that religion is paramount in improving students' academic performance. The study revealed positive significant relations between religion and students' academic performance and if not prioritized, Uganda will persistently register poor students' performance, increase in corruption and fail to achieve its 2023 goal agenda. The study shown that 79 (70.3%) of the respondents agreed that religious families were more capable of establishing social control and healthy family relationships between teachers and students while 11 (8%) were not sure of the statement however, 30 (21.7%) disagreed with the statement. When respondents asked if religious factors have positive impact of family life and family life has good impact educational attainment, more than half 73 (53%) of the respondents agreed to the statment15 (11%) were no sure however 50 (36%) disagreed with the statement. The researcher recommends secondary schools in Gombe town council to adapt to the use of religion not only as subjects of study but also to force students participate in church services, mass and Juma of time of service.

Keywords: Religion, Students, Academic Performance and Secondary Schools

Background of the study

(Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022) defined student academic performance as the level of students' performance, achievement, or success in school. Jansen (2004) defined academic performance as the process of developing the abilities and potential of individual students in order to prepare them for success in a particular society or culture and (Ntirandekura et al., 2022) defines academic performance of students as success. achieved in work study, experiments and school work with great conscious effort. However, this study will define student academic performance as the results shown by students in the relevant subject (Richard, B, & T, 2022). However, students' academic performance cannot be achieved without defined procedures and methods. Religion has been emphasized as an important weapon in achieving educational goals (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). Georgios (2019) defined religion as a system of beliefs and practices that relate to supernatural beings and are meant to organize and define the environment in which a religious community operates (Cand et al., 2022). (Richard, B, Janice, et al., 2022) defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices in

relation to sacred things, that is, things separated and forbidden by beliefs and practices that unite into one moral community. called a church or a mosque, all those who adhere to them (Richard et al., 2023). And this study will define religion as a belief system surrounding a group of individuals to a sacred supernatural endowment.

Gombe City Council is located in Butambala District in the Buganda Central Region of Uganda. Gombe Municipality is the central commercial area of Butambala District with economic activities such as wholesale and retail shops (Nelson, Christopher, Teddy, et al., 2022), municipal administrative offices, hospitals and schools. Religiously, Gombe is a multi-religious area with the majority (79%) Muslim, 18% Christian and 3% African traditional practitioners (Butambala District Report, 2022). The area has 5 private senior secondary schools (Modern, Gwadalope, Gombe Hill, St Peters and Gombe secondary schools) and 1 government aided secondary school (Kayenje Senior Secondary School) (Faridah et al., 2023).

Problem statement

The academic performance of students in Gombe District, Butambala District has declined over the years since the inauguration of Museveni's regime, which placed great emphasis on science subjects. However, if students focus heavily on religion, an opportunity is created to promote concentration, motivation, and foster a safe learning environment in schools, with the paramount importance of building a God-fearing nation that will support education in the future (Victoria et al., 2023). . Speculations such as disrespect for teachers, school leaders and parents, drug abuse, peer influence, unavailability of parents to guide their children and greater technological advancements have brought to light too much pornography and other vices among students as major factors contributing to low performance (Micheal et al., 2023). In addition, studies show that students do not perform well due to problems related to their family background, insufficient learning resources, unqualified teaching staff, poor school culture and poor government policies (Anthony et al., 2023). While focusing on teaching religious lessons and practices to students at home and at school will create a strong foundation among students to respect each other, promote peace at school and home, focus on achieving set goals as desired and thereby improve their performance (Micheal et al . , 2023). This study therefore assessed the role of religion in improving student academic achievement among students in Gombe Sub district.

Specific objectives

1. To examine the effect of attending church/ mosque services / Mass/ Juma on the motivation of students towards learning.
2. To examine the effect of attending religious lessons on students' performance in religious subjects.
3. To establish the relationship between religiosity and students' academic performance

in their national examination results.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey research design with inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative approaches where people's views and opinions were sought and described accordingly to establish how employee training affects employee performance. The study was conducted among secondary schools in Gombe town council Butambala district. The schools include Modern secondary, Gwadalope senior secondary school, Gombe Hill secondary school, St Peters secondary school and Gombe secondary

schools and Kayenje senior secondary school. A sample size of 150 respondents were selected from the population size of the study using different sampling methods as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Showing sample size and sampling method

Category	Sample size	Sampling technique
School leaders	18	Purposive sampling method
Teachers	40	Purposive sampling
Non-teaching staffs	16	Cluster sampling
Students	78	Simple random sampling
Total	150	

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), asserts that primary method of data collection involves a researcher herself by using quantitative or qualitative methods. The advantage of using these methods was that the data collected was unique to the researcher and there was no altering of the data. The researcher used the following primary data collection tools. Questionnaires such as open ended and close ended questionnaires consisting a series of questions drafted to collect information in relation to the research objectives or questions. Editing of collected data was done to make data ready and simpler for presentation. The filled questionnaires were edited one by one to correct errors done by the respondents. Data was edited in order to check for accuracy, completeness, consistency and uniformity. The edited data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively as follows; Quantitative data was grouped and statistical description such as tables showing frequencies and percentages for better interpretation are used. However, qualitative data was analyzed in a way of identifying responses from respondents that are relevant to the research problem. Mainly such data was analyzed by explaining the facts collected from the field under which the researcher was able to quote respondents' responses. Data was analyzed in form of tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson, Christopher, & Milton, 2022)

Results

Table 1: Showing respondents responses on the effect of attending church/ mosque services/Mass/ Juma on the motivation of students towards learning

		Agree	Not sure	Disagree
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No	Statement	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Religious families are more capable of establishing social control and healthy family relationships between teachers and students.	97	70.3	11	8	30	21.7
2	Religious factors have positive impact on family life and family life has good impact on educational attainment.	73	53	15	11	50	36
3	Religious practices and beliefs make the students able to contract with troubles and demanding situations in school	105	76.1	3	2.2	30	21.7
4	Religious services, Mass and Juma influence local attitudes toward education	121	87.7	1	0.7	16	11.6
5	Religion acts as a catalyst in developing education in Uganda through construction and facilitating schools.	135	98	3	2		
6	Religious services help in disciplining life and creating ethics among participants.	130	94.2			8	5.8
7	Students strengthen their religious beliefs during church and Moseque services than those who does not attend church and mosque service during the same period	138	100				

Source: primary source 2023

The first objective aimed at understanding the effect that attending church/ mosque services/ Mass/ Juma on the motivation of students towards learning and the results of the study shows that 79 (70.3%) of the respondents agreed that religious families are more capable of establishing social control and healthy family relationships between teachers and students while 11 (8%) were not sure of the statement however (W. Godfrey et al.,

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2023), 30 (21.7%) disagreed with the statement. When respondents asked if religious factors have positive impact on family life and family life has good impact on educational attainment, more than half 73 (53%) of the respondents agreed to the statement 15 (11%) were not sure however 50 (36%) disagreed with the statement. With respect to if religious practices and beliefs make students contract with troubles and demanding situations in school 105 (76.1%) agreed while 3 (2.2%) were not sure however 30 (21.7%) disagreed with the statement.

The fourth effect inquired an understanding if religious services, Mass and Juma influence local attitudes toward education, 121 (87.7%) agreed to the effect, 1 (0.7%) was not sure however 16 (11.6%) disagreed with the statement. When respondents asked about religion acting as a catalyst in developing education in Uganda through construction and facilitating schools, 135 (98%) among the respondents agreed to the statement however, 3 (2%) were not sure of the statement (Mark et al., 2023). Furthermore, 130 (94.2%) agreed that religious services help in disciplining life and creating ethics among participants, 8 (5.8%) disagreed with the statement. Lastly of the first object, 138 (100%) all respondents agreed that Students strengthen their religious beliefs during church and Mosque services than those who does not attend church and mosque service during the same period.

Table 2: Showing respondents responses on the effect of attending religious lessons on students' performance in religious subjects

No	Statement	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Religious involvement also provides a context in which students can develop social contacts that help them in their education.	120	87	6	4.3	12	8.7
2	Religious lessons help learners to develop their career objectives.	119	86.2	1	1	18	13
3	Students who spend more time in religious activities tend to spend less time involved in deviant activities	133	96.4	5	3.6		
4	Religious education provides opportunities for students to gain skills that help them succeed in school	78	56.5	13	9.4	47	34.1

5	Religious education encourage quality education among women	93	67.4	5	3.6	40	29
6	Religious studies promotes relationship and peace among school and communities of which safe environment is amongst the requirement for students'' academic performance	125	90.6	2	1.4	11	8
7	Religious studies develop learners'' faith in Godly	138	100	.			

Source: primary source 2023

This was the second objective of the study and there researcher examined it by he help o the questionnaires which were administered to respondents and the results shows that 120 (87%) of the respondents agreed that religious involvement provides a context in which students can help develop their social contacts that can help them in their education, 6 (4.3%) of the respondents were not sure of the effect however, 12 (8.7%) of them disagreed with the effect (Ronald et al., 2023).

When respondents asked about the help of religious lessons in developing students career objectives, 119 (86.2%) agreed with the statement, while 1 (1%) were not sure of the effect, however, 18 (13%) disagreed with the statement. With respect to students who spend more time in religious activities whether spend less time involved in deviant activities 133 (96.4%) agreed with the statement however, 5 (3.6%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. When asked whether religious education provide opportunities for students to again skills that help them succeed in school 78 (56.5%) agreed, 13 (9.4%) were not sure however 47 (34.1%) disagreed with the statement (Allan et al., 2023).

The fifth statement inquired an understanding whether religious education encourage quality education among women, 93 (67.4%) agreed, 5 (3.6%) were not sure of the statement however 40 (29%) disagreed with the inquiry. The researcher asked respondents if religious studies promotes relationship and peace among school and communities of which safe environment is amongst the requirement for students'' academic performance and the results shows that 125 (90.6%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 2 (1.4%) were not sure of the inquiry however, 11 (8%) disagreed with the statement. Lastly of the second objective, the researcher inquired if religious studies develop learners'' faith in Godly activities of which performance is amongst them, all respondents 138 (100%) agreed to the statement.

Discussion of findings

This was the first objective of the study and the results revealed shows that attending church/ among

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protestants, seventh day Adventists and born again; Juma among Muslims and Mass among Catholics and the result revealed that religious families are more capable of establishing social control and improving relationships (Influence et al., 2023).

The study also revealed that students who spend more time in religious activities spend less time in deviant activities. The study further more revealed that religious studies provide opportunities for students to gain skills that help them succeed in school. When students are encouraged to always attend religious programs, they gain an insight to the commandments of God that help them from participating in crime (S. Godfrey et al., n.d.). This finding was found to be in line with Johnson et al., (2000) who maintained that religious involvement deters involvement in deviant activities. Students who spend more time in religious activities tend to spend less time involved in deviant activities, and this pattern might foster conventional behaviors such as working on school projects, doing homework, seeing education as a worthwhile pursuit, and avoiding deviant peer networks (Emmanuel et al., 2023).

The study also revealed that religious education provides opportunities for students to gain skills that help them succeed in school life, it encourages equality among education and workers and promotes relationship and peace in school and communities. When related to the study conducted by Anek (2016) that argued that reformation among Christian groups encourage quality education among women. Martin Luther urged each town to have a girl's school so that girls would learn to read the gospel, evoking a surge of building girl's schools in Christian areas hence evidence that Christian schools that teach religion support students' academic performance (W. Godfrey et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The persistence poor academic performance of students in Uganda led educationists and the ministry of education and sports to refer to religion as the means of improving students' academic performance. Religion is masterful to promoting students' behaviors and ethics that promote performance at all levels. with an increasing disrespect to teachers, school leaders and parents, drug abuse, peer influence, unavailable parents to guide their children and the greater technological advancements that has brought in light of too much pornography and other vices among students are the major contributing factors for the low performance. The ministry of education and sports and other stake holders have thought of religion as one of the strategies to tackle the problem in the country, are continuing to find ways of improving students' performance. This study has discovered a positive relationship between religiosity and students' academic performance. It was revealed that attending church services, Juma and mass, students are capable of establishing social control and improving relationships between students and teachers, school leaders, parents and the community. If students' performance is not improved, there will be persistence in poverty level.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends secondary schools in Gombe town council to adapt to the use of religion not only as subjects of study but also to force students participate in church services, mass and Juma of time of service.

Parents are advised to raise their children in the will of God, since religion is Gods command and fearing God promotes performance of all kind academic performance.

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