

Influence of Parental Educational Level and Students' Academic Performance Among Secondary School Students of Kitswamba and Rugendabara-Kikongo Town Councils, Kasese District, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate whether the educational background of parents significantly affects the academic performance of secondary school students in Kitswamba and Rugendabara-Kikongo town councils, Kasese District. The study had the following objectives: to assess if parental education level impacts student academic performance in these areas. The research employed a cross-sectional design, involving 250 students and five head teachers. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, with quantitative data analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA, and qualitative data analyzed through content analysis. The findings underscored the importance of parental education for students' academic success. In conclusion, recommendations are provided for parents, teachers, policymakers, and educational administrators.

Keywords: Parental Educational Level; Students' Academic Performance; Secondary School Students; Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Education is globally accepted as the mirror of human civilization yet academic performance is seen as the major fruits and harvests of the learning process. Conditions in the socioeconomic background of students are a crucial aspect in determining their performance. High socioeconomic background is what lays a firm foundation for better performance which, actually, is the main reason parents put their children in school [1]. Good academic performance of candidates gives morale to teachers and other students in school. It promotes continuity of learning and motivates other learners to study so as to become better citizens. However, the success of students highly depends on the level of socio economic background which they come from [1, 2]. To make matters worse, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are becoming an increasing share of the student population. On one

hand, children from high socioeconomic backgrounds have access to homework, scholastic materials and their parents can communicate with them in English, guide them in decision making, career choice. Yet, families with low socioeconomic background usually lack financial, social and educational supports that are fully enjoyed in families with high socioeconomic backgrounds [3]. Parents, in such homes, face a major challenge in providing optimal care and education for their children. Educational text books, pens or uniform and so on cannot be availed due to lack of resources [4]. Thus, this study was carried out to establish how parental educational level influences students' academic performance among students in the secondary schools of Kitswamba and Rugendabara-Kikongo town councils in Kasese District, Uganda.

Literature Review

Education is a process of eliminating poverty and ignorance [5]. It fosters self-understanding [6]. It is a global

complex access book and a direct visa to the future broad because tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it

today [7]. Doris Baeck sets us into barrels of laughter in her revelation of education as the air that we breathe; meaning, without education, one is bound to suffocate [8]. In this case, Parental level of education is the scholastic attainment of mother and father in schools or colleges [9]. It is the level of study that parents attained at primary, secondary, college or university [10, 11]. Generally, traditional research has revealed that more highly educated parents especially mothers have greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills that contribute to success in school [12]. Mothers are the first teachers to their children [13, 14]. The education of mothers benefits children than that of fathers since mothers have much attachments to their children than fathers [15]. It is the educational level of parents that fertilizes the minds of their children to bear good academic fruits [7, 16]. It is pointed out that children learn by example through observations at home in what is termed as observational learning model of, "Monkey see, Monkey do" [17].

[18, 19] argue that, parental participation in the children's life of learning should be fluid, robust and specific to context and culture so that children's learning should be central to interactions. If a child's parents are reading books, attending on-going educational classes and taking them along to the museums, libraries- all activities educated parents are more likely to influence the learning of their children. Parents' level of education is important to schooling because parents want their children to maintain the status quo [1]. It is also believed that parents with higher educational levels have stronger confidence in their children's academic abilities and they also have higher expectations from them. They expect that their child will earn good grades, behave well in school, and attend college or University. These expectations and confidence in their children motivate them to do well at school. The confidence which parents have in their children also helps them to build their own confidence and self-concept which is important in their education [9, 16].

However, parents over expectations might also cause stress to their children which translates to poor educational attainments. Parental involvement creates awareness and involvement in school work, understanding of the interaction between parenting skills and the student success in schooling, and a commitment to students [11]. [20] surveyed parents of children aged 5-16 years and attending schools in England to establish their degree of involvement in their children's education. A telephone survey was used to contact two thousand and nineteen households in order to conduct interviews to establish parental levels of practical help in schools, their relationship with their children's teacher (s) and parents' involvement with homework. 20% of parents felt very involved, but more so in primary schools than secondary schools. Mothers felt more involved than fathers. 35% strongly agreed that they wanted to be more involved whilst around three quarters of parents wanted to be at least somewhat more involved. 94% found school "welcoming" and 84% reported that the school was willing to involve them [21, 22].

Despite this level of satisfaction, 16% felt they might be seen as troublesome if they talked too much. Parents describing themselves as "very involved" reported providing more practical help in school than other parents and they were the keenest to be, yet more involved. 21% of parents claimed to have helped in class at some point and 9% claimed so at every opportunity [23, 24]. This statistic tells us that those children whose parents get involved in their learning activities develop more keenness on study and tend to perform well as compared to those of parents who are non - involved. In regard to homework, parents were much more involved in the early years. 70% with year I children claimed to help with every piece of homework. This dropped to 5% by year II. As children got older, parents lost confidence in their ability to help. 58% of parents claimed to speak regularly with their child's teacher, in the main about progress but not frequently about behaviour (27%) while many parents wanted to increase their involvement to include, for example, supporting extra-curricular

initiatives, they felt that the main barriers to further involvement were the limitations of their own time [21]. In the present context the interesting findings in the survey are (a) there is a level of parental involvement and a desire for more (b) there are considerable differences between parents in levels of involvement [23, 24]. An important issue not reported on is the level of parental support for education and learning outside of schooling matters. Yet, it is this form of parental involvement which is most strongly related to achievement.

[25, 26] showed that socio-economic status had its impact in part, negatively through material deprivation and in part, positively through parental involvement and aspiration. It is upon the gap created of parental support for education and learning outside of schooling matters that my research will seek to fill [21]. Additionally, in order to make the cited researches more reliable and valid, more than one instrument would have been used in data collection. In addition, the researcher would have cross tabulated the findings as to go deeper in finding the roles that parents play and why they do so. This research limitation creates a gap for further research [24, 25]. [28] studied the effect of socio-economic status on students' achievement in which they used income, parents' education and occupation, material possessed at home, transport and servants as the indicators of socio-economic status. Data were analysed by applying percentages. The findings revealed that parental education, source of income and facilities at home affect the student's achievement. Employment for majority of the people means economic security through earning and access to financial resources [21].

Parental employment is expected to have significant effect on the welfare of their children. [29], points out that, as far as academic performance is concerned, parental occupation might have both positive and negative impact. Firstly, the source of income is essential for meeting the child's educational needs as well as participating in social activities. On the other hand possessing a job also reduces the time available for parents to spend with their children and to involve themselves in their life at

school. Each household needs to strike a balance that optimizes their time use. Research studies from [28, 30] available indicate that there is a relationship between education level and academic performance.

[31] undertook a study to investigate the relationship of parental occupation and educational level with academic achievement. The sample of the study consisted of 1359 randomly selected high school students (age range 14 to 17 years), studying in 22 urban and six rural secondary schools in Lucknow District. The study showed that there was a positive relationship between the level of parental occupation and mean high school marks [21]. It was also seen that the difference in the mean achievement scores of the students belonging to different occupational groups were statistically significant. Analysis of covariance showed that this relationship held good even when intelligence (measured by progressive matrices test) was held constant. According to [32], highly educated parents have more resources to meet the needs of their homes, while the low educated parents have limited resources for the same. An unstable or insufficient fund limits families' ability to purchase resources and goods (schooling, housing, food and cognitively enriched learning environment) that are critical for successful development and academic performance [33].

[34, 35] also established that parents of low occupational status may not feel free with or capable of assisting their children in school work [36]. The researchers further report that these parents may not become involved in their children's schooling in ways that enhance performance. [37] notes that parents of low education status have been known to destruct schools or even go to the extent of monitoring rather than collaborating with school due to perceived or actual discrimination of their children by the school. [38] found out that lack of guidance and support from parents of low education status used the primary reason that low income, middle school students were less likely to attend college despite the parents' aspirations and involvements. Lower academic performances, completion of fewer years of schooling

and lower career aspirations were associated with adolescents from lower socio-economic status backgrounds and ethnic minorities in America [37, 16].

[37, 39] report that children from homes with low income due to low parental occupations may model their parents lowers levels of educational attainment. They may not work hard to attain high grades in school. He further observes that the link between academic performance and future occupational success may be less clear for children from low socio-economic status homes. Increased reliance on public assistance and greater receipt of welfare income has been associated with children's lower academic achievement. This may be due to stigma, assets [37]. Unstable work and unemployment is psychologically stressful for parents, which in turn inhibits parents' emotional warmth and increases their erratic or disengaged behaviours. Ineffective parenting can lead to poorer adjustment in the children at school. [40] hypothesized that watching one's parent experiencing job insecurity would be experienced as stressful and elicit feelings of uncertainty and powerlessness in children. Their results showed that undergraduates who perceive their parent to be insecure about their jobs are distracted

cognitively and have worse academic performance. [32], showed that fathers job losses predicts the probability that teenage children was held back in grade or suspended from school.[40] pointed out that children from parents with high occupational status have been known to model their parents' positive educational experiences and higher prestige occupations. They may serve as role models for the children's own occupational aspirations. From studies of [41], we notice that the study consisted of 1359 randomly selected high school students (age range 14 to 17 years), studying in 22 urban and six rural secondary schools in Lucknow District. There is a gap in that the students sampled in the 22 schools are urban inhabitants. My study also concentrates more on students studying in rural and urban informal settlements in relation to their parental level of education. Overall, the literature above reveals that parental education relates to students performance. However, contextual gaps emerged as all the studies were done in contexts outside Uganda. These contextual gaps make it imperative for this study in the context of school in Uganda to investigate the influence of parental education and students' performance.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a cross sectional research design. [42] submits that a cross section design is useful in basic research because it examines the relationship between exposure and outcome in a defined population at a single point in time. The justification for this cross-sectional design is that it is flexible and provides opportunities for considering many different aspects of a problem in-depth at a particular time [43]. This study applied qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Also, the application of a cross-sectional study design was that it will allow the researcher to compare many different variables including age, gender and educational level in relation to how socioeconomic background affects school involvement among secondary schools. The use of qualitative helped in capturing fresh statements from respondents and quantitative research approach helped in counting or use of

numerical figures while determining something. This study was conducted in the secondary schools of Kitswamba-Rugendabara town councils in Kasese district. Rugendabara Town Council is located along Fort-portal- Kasese road, ten kilometres from Hiima town council along Fort-portal Kasese road in Western Uganda, while Kitswamba town council is located five kilometres off Kasese-Fort-portal Road, branching off from Rugendabara Town Council on the left. Five different secondary schools were sampled for this study. Taking these schools helped the researcher to achieve the relationship between socioeconomic background and students' academic performance. Furthermore, the study population is all universal objects over which research is to be carried out. This involves the selection of people/objects that help to get the necessary data about the study [43]. For [44], population is the totality of persons or objects with

which the study is concerned. [45] asserts that population is “the complete set of individual, objects or measurements having some common observable characteristics.” The population was a total of 1,112 senior one to three students for the questionnaire survey and 5 head teachers for the interview guide. The students easily reported about their socio-economic background and

academic performance while the head teachers will supplement their responses. The sample size was 286 for the questionnaire survey determined using the table by [46]. The sample of students from each school was determined by proportionate sampling to ensure proportionate representation. The proportionate sample has been calculated as follows:

Proportion Sample: $n_1 = \frac{\text{size of entire sample}}{\text{target population}} \times \text{sample size}$

For example, the sample for school A has determined as follows:

$$n_1 = \frac{516}{1,112} \times 286 = 133$$

The ample size is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Size

Category	Target population	Sample Size	Sampling method
School A	516	133	Simple random sampling
School B	218	56	Simple random sampling
School C	117	30	Simple random sampling
School E	183	47	Simple random sampling
School F	78	20	Simple random sampling
Total	1,112	286	

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was employed on five particular head teachers as the study was both qualitative and quantitative while targeting those respondents who will give specific information. By applying Purposive sampling, the researcher was able to select a small number of cases which he is sure of getting enough information on the topic of study. In other words, purposive sampling helps in attaining the adequate and specific data required for the study. Simple

random sampling technique was employed to cover students in different classes in ordinary level. Using these sampling techniques, the research ensured that respondents are covered accordingly in order that the study may generate the adequate data required. The reasons as to why simple random sampling was applied to parents is that this number of respondents is big and it saved time because every respondent will take a questionnaire and will answer in his/her own time.

Method of Data Collection

Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. It is a good instrument of collecting quantitative data. They were precisely designed, administered, coded and analyzed. Comparisons and quantifications were done to produce fully completed questionnaires. Irrelevant responses were avoided. Questions for section “A” were on demographic characteristics and so were categorical. Questions for section “B” will ordinal based on the

three-competence scale of 1= Basic, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Outstanding. This is because the scale required respondent’s little effort in filling/answering the questions. Section C contained numerical responses identifying the different socio-economic backgrounds. The levels of income (see Appendix A) have been rated basing Uganda consumer price index (CPI) of 2022 and Uganda World Bank Country Classifications by Income Level (2022).

Interview guide

The study employed was semi-structured interview guide to collect quantitative data from students, teachers, and head teachers. This tool

was applied to generate data from these respondents who were indirectly affected, interview guides generated detailed data because they were used to

probe respondents and was conducted by telephone in case such an individual

is absent or busy.

Reliability of the Instrument

Pre-testing of instruments was carried out to establish their validity, to check on the content and the format of the instruments to find out the relationship between scores contained using one or

more other instruments to measure. The validity of the questionnaires was determined by using the Content Validity Index (CVI) formula.

$$CVI = \frac{n}{N}$$

Where; *n* = items rated relevant
N = Total numbers of items

The CVI for the questionnaire was 0.85. The questionnaire was considered valid

because the minimum validity index should be 0.70 [47].

Reliability of Instruments (Cronbach's alpha coefficient)

It was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient

$$\alpha = \frac{(K)(S_2 - \sum s_2^2)}{(S_2)(K - 1)}$$

Where, *K* - Total number of items

S₂ -variance in all items

s₂ -variance in individual items

The Cronbach's alpha obtained was 0.89 suggesting the questionnaire was reliable. This is because the minimum is

$\alpha = 0.70$ and above which is the minimal level [48].

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data was compiled using SPSS 24.0 computer package and was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was in form of frequencies and percentages. On the other hand, inferential statistics was in form of Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) to establish variance in performance of students according socio-economic background characteristics. The

qualitative data generated was presented and interpreted basing on themes derived from the sub themes of the study objectives in the introductory chapter. The qualitative data was obtained from quotations and people's experiences. Content analysis helped in the use of determining the relationship between the two variables socioeconomic background and school involvement.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study were discussed based on the analysed data

related to the research question and hypothesis as described below:

Level of Education of my Father/ Male Guardian

The first question on parent's education level concerned the level of education of the father or male guardian. The levels of education considered were non

formal, primary education, secondary education and tertiary levels. The descriptive results on the same were as follows:

Table 2: Level of Education of Father/ Male Guardian

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Non formal	2	0.8
Primary education	37	14.8
Secondary education	139	55.6
Tertiary	72	28.8
Total	250	100.0

The results in Table 2 show that the larger percentage (55.6%) of the father or male guardians had secondary

education followed by those who had tertiary education (14.8%), then those who had primary education (14.8%) and the least group (0.8%) had non-formal

education. To confirm whether the level of education of father or male guardian leads to significant differences in students' academic performance, an

analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was carried out. The results on the same are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: ANOVA Results for Father or Male Guardian and Students' Academic Performance

Age Group	Size	Mean	Std	F	P
Non formal	2	1.42	0.01	3.847	0.010
Primary education	37	2.12	0.32		
Secondary education	139	2.10	0.29		
Tertiary	72	2.15	0.32		
Total	250	2.11	0.31		

The results in Table 3 suggest that the mean scores for those with tertiary education (mean = 2.15) were highest followed by those with primary education (mean = 2.12), then those with secondary education (mean = 2.10) with the least being those non-formal education (mean 1.42) had the lowest mean scores. The observed $F = 3.847$ was large with the level of significance ($p = 0.010$, $p < 0.05$). This suggested

that the variations in students' performance by education of father male guardian were significant. Therefore, the hypothesis to the effect that parental educational level leads to significant differences in students' academic performance in the secondary schools was supported. Thus, children whose parents who had higher levels of education were likely to perform than those of lower education.

Level of Education of my Mother/ Female Guardian

The first question on parent's education concerned the level of education of the mother or female guardian. The levels of education considered were non formal,

primary education, secondary education and tertiary levels. The descriptive results on the same were as follows:

Table 4: Level of Education of Mother/ Female Guardian

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Non formal	4	1.6
Primary education	40	16.0
Secondary education	139	55.6
Tertiary	67	26.8
Total	250	100.0

The results in Table 4 show that the larger percentage (55.6%) of the mother or female guardians had secondary education followed by those who had tertiary education (26.8%), then those who had primary education (16.0%) and the least group (1.6%) had non-formal

education. To confirm whether the level of education of mother or female guardian leads to significant differences in students' academic performance, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was carried out. The results on the same are presented in Table 4.

Table 5: ANOVA Results for Education of the Mother or Female Guardian and Students' Academic Performance

Age Group	Size	Mean	Std	F	P
Non formal	4	1.50	0.23	6.453	0.000
Primary education	40	2.11	0.31		
Secondary education	139	2.10	0.29		
Tertiary	67	2.17	0.31		
Total	250	2.11	0.31		

The results in Table 5 suggest that the mean scores for those with tertiary education (mean = 2.17) were highest followed by those with primary education (mean = 2.11), then those with

secondary education (mean = 2.10) with the least being those non-formal education (mean 1.50) had the lowest mean scores. The observed $F = 3.847$

was large with the level of significance ($p = 0.010$, $p < 0.05$). This suggested that the variations in students' performance by education of mother or female guardian were significant. Therefore, the hypothesis to the effect that parental educational level leads to significant differences in students' academic performance in the secondary schools was supported. Thus, children whose parents who had higher levels of education were likely to perform than those of lower education. However, the results for parents or guardians according to sex showed that the education of the mothers has more significant influence than that of the fathers. This is because the F= statistic ($F = 6.453$) for the females was higher ($F = 3.847$) than of the males with a lower p-value ($p = 0.000$) than that of males ($p = 0.010$). To ascertain whether the views of head teachers about the influence of parents' education level on performance of students, the head teachers were asked to give their opinion on influence of parents' education level on performance of their children. Several related responses were given and follow here under. Head teacher 2 said;

Children of parents with high educational level have the motivation to study hard. This is because their parents act as role models besides motivating them to study and become successful. Such parents provide scholastic materials because they know the value of education. In addition, such parents struggle hard to pay school fees in time even when their economic standing is not good because they do not want their children to be disrupted by sending them home for fees. This enables the learners to concentrate at school.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The first objective of the study sought to examine whether parental educational level led to significant differences in students' academic performance in the secondary schools. The hypothesis derived from the objective and research questions was to the effect that parental educational level leads to significant differences in students' academic performance. The test hypothesis test

In agreement with the above, head teacher 3 said;

Parents who are educated have higher educational expectations from their children. Therefore, they give them appropriate behavioural guidance and make sure they provide them sufficient scholastic materials to enable them to learn effectively. Therefore, the education of the parent enhances academic performance. In addition, some educated parents support students to do their academic work such as checking their school activities and being in touch with the school to follow the progress of their children.

Consistent with the other head teachers, head teacher 5 expounded that;

Parents who are educated facilitate the learning of their children. They provide appropriate learning environment like accessing their children light, a table and a chair at home. Such parents also ensure that their children have time to study and revise their books. Above all, educated parents pay fees in time, provide school requirements and motivate their children to perform well.

The views above from the head teachers showed that parents who were educated effectively supported the education of their children. This finding is consistent with the ANOVA test results which revealed that the variations in students' performance by education of the parents or guardians were significant. Therefore, education background of the parents or guardians leads to significant differences in the academic performance of the children.

results and qualitative analysis revealed that parental educational level leads to significant differences in students' academic performance. This finding was in agreement with the findings and assertions of previous scholars. For example, [1] asserted that the parents' level of education is important to schooling because parents want their children to maintain the status quo.

Accordingly, parents with higher educational levels had stronger confidence in their children's academic abilities and they also have higher expectations from them. Such parents expected that their child to earn good grades, behave well in school, and attend college or University. These expectations and confidence in their children motivated them to do well at school. According to [9], the confidence which parents had in their children helped them to build their own confidence and self-concept which is important in their education.

Further, the finding of the study agrees with [24] who established educated parents involved themselves in the learning activities of their children which made them develop more keenness to their studies hence performing well as compared to those children of parents who were not - involved. Related to this, [41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46] indicated that highly educated parents have greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills that contribute to success in school. In the same vein, [28] revealed that parental education had an effect the student's achievement. Also, [28, 30, 47, 48, 49, 50] reported existence of a significant relationship between education level and academic performance of learners. In the same way, [32, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55] expounded

that highly educated parents had more resources to meet the needs of their homes, while the low educated parents have limited resources for the same. Therefore, educated parents are able to support the education of their children. Also, in agreement with the finding of the study, [37, 56, 57, 58] noted that parents of higher education status support schools' activities while parents of low education destruct schools due to perceived or actual discrimination of their children by the school. In agreement, [38, 59, 60, 61] reported that educated parents offer learning guidance and counselling to their children by parents with low education do not. Accordingly, lack of guidance and support from parents of low education status was the reason that low income, middle school students were less likely to attend college despite the parents' aspirations and involvements. Consistently, [37] indicated that lower academic performances, completion of fewer years of schooling and lower career aspirations were associated with adolescents from families with lower education. Generally, the discussion above shows that parental education level influence students' academic performance. Therefore, variations in academic achievement of learners are significantly linked to the education levels of their parents.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings affirm the vital role of parental educational level in students' academic performance. Students with parents who have attained higher education, particularly at the tertiary level, tend to achieve better academic outcomes. This is attributed to the effective support provided by well-

educated parents, who create conducive learning environments at home by ensuring access to study materials, proper lighting, desks, and chairs. These parents also allocate study time and motivate their children to excel, enabling them to reach their educational goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's outcomes, several recommendations are made: Promote Parental Education: The government of Uganda and school administrators should actively encourage parental education throughout the country. This can be achieved through in-service training and adult education programs, recognizing that parents' educational enlightenment significantly influences their children's academic performance. Enhance Communication with Parents: Teachers and school administrators

should strive to maintain effective communication with parents regarding their children's progress in school. Regular feedback can help parents better support their child's educational journey.

Further Research: The results regarding the hypothesis that parental educational level significantly impacts students' academic performance were unexpected. Hence, further research in different contexts should investigate this hypothesis. Additionally, future studies

should explore factors affecting academic performance at various educational levels. Incorporating these

recommendations can contribute to improved academic outcomes and the overall quality of education in Uganda.

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