

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUPILS IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KAMULI DISTRICT, UGANDA. A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.

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Abstract

Background

Access to adequate resources and facilities helps create a conducive learning environment and enriches the educational experience, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes. This study examined the relationship between school Management Policies and academic Performance of Pupils in Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District, Uganda.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive correlational and cross-sectional survey design. Further, the study adopted a mixed research approach. A target population of 213 participants was used out of which 134 were selected as the sample size using (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides and secondary data was collected by use of a documentary review list.

Results

71 (59%) of the pupils were aged 5-17 years, 71 (59%) of the respondents were single, there was a strong positive significant correlation ($r=0.673$, $\text{sig}=0.000$) between disciplinary policies and academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District. There was a weak positive significant correlation ($r=0.673$, $\text{sig}=0.000$) between school fees policies and the academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District. One Head Teacher said "Our school faces several challenges that affect academic performance, as seen in pupils' struggles with problem-solving, literacy, and overall subject comprehension. A major issue is the poor attitude towards learning, where pupils show little interest in class activities and rarely complete homework".

Conclusion

There is a significant relationship between school management policies and academic performance of primary pupils in Kamuli District, with disciplinary policies showing strong positive correlation and fees policies showing weak positive correlation.

Recommendations

Parents should be actively engaged in the discipline process through regular meetings, workshops, and collaborative interventions to reinforce positive behavior at home. Schools should improve transparency and accountability in the use of Universal Primary Education (UPE) funds to enhance the quality of education and minimize the need for additional parental contributions.

Keywords: School Management Policies, Academic Performance, Primary Education, Kamuli District

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Background

School management policies refer to a set of rules, regulations, and guidelines that are implemented by the school administration to effectively manage and govern various aspects of the institution (Eriksen, 2018). These policies aim to provide a structured and safe learning environment for students, ensure efficient daily operations, and promote the overall well-being of students, staff, and the school community (Brady & Wilson, 2021). School management policies may cover areas such as student conduct, attendance, discipline, academic regulations, curriculum development, staff hiring and evaluation, financial management, safety and security protocols, and

communication strategies (Dia, Løvhaug, Rukundo, & Torheim, 2021). These policies are typically developed by school administrators in collaboration with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to create a cohesive and productive school community (Zulaika et al., 2022). Academic performance refers to the measurement of a student's achievements in educational settings, typically evaluated through grades, test scores, and other standardized assessments (Eton, 2019). It includes a student's ability to comprehend and apply knowledge, their level of understanding of subjects, their participation and engagement in learning activities, and their overall achievement in their respective academic pursuits.

Academic performance is often used as an indicator of a student's success in their education and can influence their future opportunities and prospects (Okia, Naluwemba, & Kasule, 2021). School management policies determine the allocation of resources and funding for learning materials, libraries, technology, and infrastructure (Blau & Presser, 2013). Access to adequate resources and facilities helps create a conducive learning environment and enriches the educational experience, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes. Effective management policies prioritize the establishment of student support systems, such as counseling services, special education programs, and interventions for struggling students. These services cater to the diverse needs of pupils, enhance their well-being, and provide additional academic support, leading to improved performance (Tsang, Teng, Lian, & Wang, 2021). It is important to note that the impact of school management policies on academic performance may vary depending on various socio-economic and cultural factors. However, when implemented strategically and in collaboration with all stakeholders, they can greatly contribute to the academic success of primary pupils. The district has several initiatives in place to ensure that quality education is provided to all pupils (Nanyonjo, 2023). These initiatives include: a policy on school fees, and a policy that requires all schools to have a library, computer lab, and a science lab to provide students with the necessary resources for quality education (Kamuli District Inspector of School, 2023). A district-wide policy on the provision of uniforms to students, to ensure that all students have access to the same quality of clothing, a policy on teacher qualifications and training that ensures that all teachers in the district are adequately qualified and trained to provide quality education (Nakalema, 2022). The most recent published data on the academic performance of pupils in both private and government-aided primary

schools in Kamuli District was from the 2021-2023 academic year. According to this data, the overall performance of pupils in the town was below average (Kamuli District PLE Assessment Reports, 2023). Specifically, the average scores for English, Mathematics, and Science were 48%, 44%, and 42% respectively. This study examined the relationship between school Management Policies and academic Performance of Pupils in Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District, Uganda.

Methodology Research Design

A descriptive correlational and cross-sectional survey design was used. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted because it permitted the researcher to study a target population by studying a representative cross-section of the population to arrive at findings that were logical and applicable to the entire target population. The study also used a mixed research approach where both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques were used. Quantitative techniques were applied to numeric data and qualitative techniques were deployed for non-numeric data, such as respondents' views or opinions, preferences, attitudes, and feelings.

Target Population

The target population for this study consisted of four primary schools in Kamuli District. The study used head teachers, primary seven pupils, and teachers of the selected primary schools as respondents for the study. A target of 293 participants was used in this study. This consisted of 04 head teachers, 54 teachers, and 235 primary seven pupils (Kamuli District Education Department, 2023).

Table 1: Target population

Selected primary schools	Head teachers	Teachers	Primary seven pupils
Mbulamuti Junior Primary School	01	15	55
Namaira Parents primary school	01	14	64
Kamuli primary school	01	13	56
St Lawrence primary school	01	12	60
Total	04	54	235
Target Population			293

Source: Kamuli District Education Department, (May, 2023)

Sample size

Table 2: Population Size, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Selected participants	Population size	Sample size	Sampling technique
Head teachers	04	04	Purposive sampling
Teachers	54	52	Purposive sampling
Students	235	111	Simple random sampling
Target Population	293	167	

Source: Kamuli District Education Department, (May, 2023)

For this study, the researcher adopted the (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) table of determining sample size to determine the sample size. Therefore, 167 respondents were selected as the study respondents.

Sampling Techniques

The study used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to select the respondents for the study. Under non-probability sampling, purposive sampling was used to select participants for the study. These included teachers and head teachers since they have in-depth knowledge about school management policies and academic performance of pupils in selected schools. Simple random sampling was used to select pupils in primary seven to participate in the study. The method was used so as to give all the pupils an opportunity to participate in the study and eliminate bias.

Research Instruments

Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides. The interview guides were used to collect information from teachers and head teachers while questionnaires were used to collect information from primary seven pupils. Secondary data was collected by use of a documentary review list.

Questionnaires

This technique involved the use of written-down items to which the respondent individually responds in writing. The items were in the form of statements. The reason for choosing this technique was to administer a large population in a short time. The questionnaire was structured into sections that sought responses for the demographic characteristics of respondents, open-ended and Likert format questions that were in line with the study objectives.

Interviews

This instrument helped the researcher to collect information that cannot be directly observed. Data from head teachers and teachers was obtained by the use of interviews. This was used to acquire in-depth information about the study topic.

Documentary Review Checklist

Information was sourced from documents related to the area of study. These documents were studied and critically reviewed while putting the ethical standards in mind. They were used to examine the effectiveness, relevance, and appropriateness of the language, including those related to the policies and background information of the organization, mainly the end-of-term reports and general staff meetings minutes.

Research Procedure

An introductory letter was sought from the School of Graduate Studies and Research of Team University, which was presented to head teachers of the selected primary schools in Kamuli District seeking authorization to conduct

research and request them to participate. The researcher administered the questionnaire to the respective respondents, developed with the guidance of the supervisor. He further made appointments with the respondents on when, where, and at what venue they met to conduct interviews or administer questionnaires. The study also made use of secondary data by reviewing available relevant textbooks, journal articles, periodicals, manuals, dissertations, publications, and visiting Newspapers, both international and local ones. The authors of these articles were fully cited and accredited for their contribution to this research.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure that the selected data collection instruments were capable of collecting the data that they meant to collect, and that they could measure consistently the variables that they were supposed to measure, the instruments were pre-tested for validity and reliability.

Validity of the study

This study subjected its instruments of data collection to face validity because it ensured the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the inferences made from the results. With the help of the supervisor, the correctness of research elements in collecting data was done based on the Four (4) Point Scale of relevance, clarity, simplicity, and ambiguity. Content Validity Index (CVI) for the item was determined by dividing the number of valid questions (relevant) by the total number of questions in the instrument. Only those instruments with CVI that were over 70% in CVI were selected to collect data for the study.

Reliability of the Study

Reliability concentrated on assessing consistency and stability of data collection instruments against any chance factors or environmental conditions in measurement of the variables (Mugenda, 1999). The instruments for data collection were tested for internal reliability from within the school, but a total number of 5 respondents were used in the study.

Data Analysis

The study collected qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was entered into a data sheet using coded values, and manipulated using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS 18.0 Windows). Descriptive statistics were obtained and cross-tabulations of some items were made to obtain relationships, and tested using Pearson correlation coefficients significant at 0.01 levels. Additionally, frequency counts and percentages were obtained to facilitate interpretations and conclusions.

Graphic illustrations were used to summarize and portray the general trends of the results. Direct quotations from documents and interviews were used to illustrate ideas and opinions.

Results

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent(%)
Gender		
Male	44	37%
Female	76	63%
Total	120	100%
Age		
5-17 years	71	59%
18+ years	49	41%
Total	120	100%
Marital status		
Single	71	59%
Married	42	35%
Separated	7	6%
Total	120	100%
Education level		
Primary	71	59%
Secondary	0	0%
Tertiary	40	33%
University	9	8%
Total	120	100

Table 3 indicates that males were 44 (37%) and females were 76 (63%). This shows that the majority of respondents in selected primary schools in Kamuli District are female (63%). Therefore, gender significantly affects the academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District. Also, findings showed that the respondents aged 5-17 years were 71 (59%) and those aged 18+ years were 49 (41%). This shows that

the majority of respondents in the study were in the 5-17 years age group (59%). Thus, shows that the majority of the respondents of the study were primary pupils in Kamuli District. Findings on marital status of the respondents showed that single respondents were 71 (59%), married were 42 (35%), and the separated ones were 7 (6%). This shows that the majority of respondents in Kamuli District

for this study were single (59%) and hence primary pupils. Findings showed that 71 (59%) of the respondents had primary, 40 (33%) respondents had tertiary education, and 9 (8%) respondents had University education. This shows that the majority of respondents have a primary education level

(59%), while no respondents have a secondary education level. Overall, the data analysis highlights that the majority of respondents in Kamuli District are female, in the age group of 5-17years, single, and have a primary education level.

Disciplinary Policies in Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District

Table 4: Descriptive Findings of Disciplinary Policies in Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District

Statements	Mean	standard deviation
The school has a functional disciplinary committee	4.4	0.2
Teacher engagements with indisciplined pupils is more effective in improving pupil behaviours	1.7	0.4
Suspension of pupils is rarely used for indisciplined pupils	4.1	0.8
Expulsion of pupils is used in isolated cases of indiscipline.	4.6	0.5
Disciplinary policies are enforced consistently within the school	4.4	0.2
Disciplinary policies ensure adherence to the school programs	2.7	0.4
Disciplinary policies focus on character development of pupils	4.1	0.3
Implementing disciplinary policies involves clear communication with all the stakeholders	1.6	0.5

Table 4 revealed that, on the statement “The school has a disciplinary committee that is functional, hence ensures discipline among pupils,” the average response was 4.4 with a standard deviation of 0.2. Therefore, school disciplinary committees are essential for ensuring discipline among pupils in selected primary schools in Kamuli District. On the statement “Teacher engagements with indisciplined pupils are more effective in improving pupil behaviours and academic performance,” the average response was 1.7 with a standard deviation of 0.4. Therefore, teacher engagements with indisciplined pupils do not effectively improve pupil behaviours and academic performance in selected primary schools in Kallansi Town Council. On the statement “Suspension of pupils has a direct impact on their academic performance,” the average response was 4.1 with a standard deviation of 0.8. Therefore, suspension of pupils as a punishment for bad behaviour has an impact on pupils' attendance of class lessons and academic performance in selected primary schools in Kaggajansi Town Council. On the statement “Expulsion of pupils from school has a direct impact on academic performance and schools' dropouts in Kamuli District,” the average response was 4.6 with a standard deviation of 0.5. Therefore, expulsion of pupils from school has a direct impact on academic performance and school dropouts in selected primary schools in Kaggajansi Town Council. The study findings suggest that when disciplinary policies are enforced consistently, they create a safe and disciplined environment for learning. This conducive atmosphere enables students to focus better, participate actively in classroom activities, and engage effectively with their studies, leading to improved academic performance. The mean score for this statement was 4.4, indicating a high level of agreement among the participants. On the other hand, the participants had a lower level of

agreement (mean score of 2.7) when it came to the emphasis of disciplinary policies on punctuality, regular attendance, and adherence to the school timetable. This suggests that the participants were not fully convinced that these aspects of disciplinary policies directly lead to improved academic performance. The participants, however, had a high level of agreement (mean score of 4.1) that disciplinary policies focus on character development by promoting values such as honesty, integrity, and responsibility. They believed that these values encourage pupils to develop traits that are not only beneficial for their academic success but also for their personal and professional lives. Lastly, the participants strongly agreed (mean score of 1.6) that implementing disciplinary policies involves clear communication between teachers, students, and parents. They believed that this clear communication promotes positive relationships and mutual respect among all stakeholders, ultimately leading to the academic excellence of pupils. During the interview, a head teacher from one of the selected primary schools said, "Our school enforces a positive discipline approach that focuses on guidance rather than punishment. We have a clear code of conduct that emphasizes respect, responsibility, and accountability. When a pupil misbehaves, we use counseling sessions, peer mediation, and teacher-led discussions to correct behavior. For repeated offenses, we involve parents and assign corrective tasks, such as community service within the school. Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited, and we work closely with teachers and student leaders to ensure discipline is maintained fairly and constructively." Another head teacher said, "We operate under a structured disciplinary system that includes a set of rules clearly outlined in our school handbook. Minor offenses like lateness or failing to complete assignments result in verbal warnings or extra academic work. More

serious cases, such as bullying or defiance, lead to written warnings and engagement with parents. In extreme cases, a disciplinary committee reviews the matter and may recommend suspension. Our approach prioritizes behavior

reform through mentorship and peer support programs, ensuring that students understand the consequences of their actions while receiving the necessary guidance."

School Fees Policies in Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District

Table 5: Descriptive Findings on School Fees Policies in Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District

	Mean	stanadrd deviation
Failure to pay school dues (PTA and Development fund) led pupils to miss classes	4.1	0.6
Failure to clear examination fees cause pupils to miss exams	4.5	0.4
Failure to pay feeding dues makes pupils to stay hungry	4.3	0.3
Failure to pay school dues for boarding facility especially by candidates affects their syllabus coverage	4.3	0.2

Table 5 revealed that the average response on the statement "Failure to pay school dues (PTA and Development fund) led pupils to miss classes, hence affecting their academic performance" was 4.1 with a standard deviation of 0.6. Therefore, failure to pay school dues (PTA and Development Fund) results in pupils missing classes, which in turn leads to poor academic performance. The average response on the statement "Failure to clear examination fees causes pupils to miss exams, hence not being assessed for progression", was 4.5 with a standard deviation of 0.4. Therefore, failure to clear examination fees interrupts pupils' learning; hence, they miss exams and lack assessments. The average response on the statement "Failure to pay feeding dues makes pupils stay hungry, which emotionally affects their focus, resulting in poor grades ", was 4.3 with a standard deviation of 0.3. Therefore, failure to pay feeding dues causes pupils to stay hungry, which emotionally affects their focus, resulting in poor grades. The average response on the statement, "Failure to pay school dues for boarding facility, especially by candidates, affects their syllabus coverage and academic performance of pupils", was 4.3 with a standard deviation of 0.2. Therefore, failure to pay school dues for boarding facilities, especially by candidates, affects their syllabus coverage and academic performance of pupils. The school dues are considered to be too high, with a mean score of 2.4. This indicates that some parents find it difficult to pay these dues, which can lead to high dropout rates and limited access to education. Consequently, this can hurt academic performance, as students may miss out on crucial lessons and assessments. School fees are seen as playing a crucial role in funding the purchase of necessary resources such as textbooks, stationery, laboratory equipment, and teaching aids. The mean score of 4.7 suggests that participants agree that adequate fees are necessary for ensuring a sufficient supply of resources. When fees are insufficient, schools may struggle to provide a satisfactory learning environment. Another contribution of

school fees is the payment of teacher salaries and other incentives. With an average score of 4.1, it can be concluded that participants agree that insufficient fees can negatively affect schools' ability to attract and retain qualified teachers. This, in turn, can lead to poor academic performance. Low school fee collections are linked to dilapidated buildings and inadequate facilities, as indicated by the mean score of 2.6. This finding suggests that when schools do not have enough funds due to low fee collections, they may struggle to maintain their infrastructure, which can have a detrimental effect on the learning environment and hinder academic performance. The inability to hire enough teachers due to financial constraints, as reflected in the mean score of 4.1, can result in a low student-teacher ratio. This can hinder academic progress as effective teaching and individual attention may be compromised. During the interview, one of the key respondents said, "As a UPE school, we follow the government policy of free primary education, meaning no tuition fees are charged. However, to support school operations, we request parents to make small contributions for lunch, uniforms, and school development projects. These contributions are voluntary, and no child is sent home for failing to pay. To implement this policy, we engage parents in meetings to discuss the importance of their support, and we work with the School Management Committee to ensure transparency and fairness in the use of these funds." Another head teacher said, "Our school strictly adheres to the Universal Primary Education policy, which ensures that every child can access free education. While tuition is covered by government funding, we encourage parents to contribute towards meals and other co-curricular activities to enhance the learning environment. These contributions are discussed in Parents' Association meetings and are collected in a manner that does not disadvantage any child. We closely monitor the use of UPE grants to ensure proper allocation of resources and regularly report to the district education office for accountability."

Academic Performance of Pupils in Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District

Table 6: Descriptive Findings Academic Performance of Pupils in Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District.

	Mean	stanadrdr deviation
Pupils perform excellently in Primary Leaving Examinations	2.1	0.6
Pupils perform well in term scores	2.2	0.4
All pupils progress to their next classes	2.3	0.3
The pupil demonstrates a clear understanding of the subject material	2.2	0.2
The pupil's complete assignments and homework on time and to a satisfactory standard	1.9	0.1
The pupil actively participates in class discussions and activities	2.4	0.4
The pupil demonstrates effective problem-solving skills	2.1	0.2
The pupil shows a positive attitude towards learning	1.8	0.4

Table 6 revealed that, On Performance in Primary Leaving Examinations (Mean = 2.1, SD = 0.6), pupils' performance in the national Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) was rated at 2.1, which suggests a moderate level of achievement. However, the standard deviation of 0.6 indicates some variation in performance, meaning that while some pupils perform well, others may struggle. On Performance in Term Scores (Mean = 2.2, SD = 0.4), academic performance of pupils is slightly higher at 2.2, with a lower standard deviation of 0.4. This suggests that most pupils perform within a similar range, with fewer extreme variations. On Pupil Progression to the Next Class (Mean = 2.3, SD = 0.3), the mean score of 2.3 indicates that most pupils are progressing to the next class, although the relatively low standard deviation (0.3) suggests consistency in promotions. This implies that retention rates may be low, with most students advancing despite variations in individual performance. On Understanding of Subject Material (Mean = 2.2, SD = 0.2), Pupils' comprehension of subject content was rated at 2.2, showing a moderate level of understanding. The very low standard deviation of 0.2 indicates that most pupils perform closely around this average, with minimal deviation. On Completion of Assignments and Homework (Mean = 1.9, SD = 0.1), the lowest mean score (1.9) is observed in the completion of assignments and homework, suggesting that many pupils struggle with timely and satisfactory submission. The extremely low standard deviation (0.1) indicates uniformity in this trend, implying that most students exhibit similar behavior in this aspect. On Participation in Class Activities (Mean = 2.4, SD = 0.4), this indicator has the highest mean score of 2.4, suggesting that students are relatively more engaged in classroom discussions and activities. However,

the standard deviation of 0.4 reflects some variability, meaning that while some pupils are highly active, others are less participative. On Problem-Solving Skills (Mean = 2.1, SD = 0.2), the ability to apply problem-solving skills is rated at 2.1, showing a moderate level of proficiency. The standard deviation (0.2) suggests that most pupils perform within a similar range, with little variation. On Attitude towards Learning (Mean = 1.8, SD = 0.4), the lowest rating (1.8) is observed in students' attitudes toward learning, indicating that motivation and enthusiasm for education might be low. The standard deviation of 0.4 suggests some differences in attitudes, with some pupils showing more positivity than others. During the interview with one of the Head Teachers, he said, "The academic performance of our pupils is generally below the expected standards, with many struggling in national examinations and termly assessments. One key indicator of poor performance is the low pass rates in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE), where a significant number of pupils score in the lower divisions. Additionally, class test results show weak comprehension skills, especially in reading and mathematics. Many pupils also fail to complete assignments on time, and teachers report low participation in class discussions. Factors such as high absenteeism, lack of parental support, and limited access to learning materials contribute to these challenges. To address this, we have introduced remedial lessons and community engagement programs to support learning." Another Head Teacher said, "Our school faces several challenges that affect academic performance, as seen in pupils' struggles with problem-solving, literacy, and overall subject comprehension. Termly assessments reveal that many pupils perform below average, particularly in English and Science. A major issue is the poor attitude

towards learning, where pupils show little interest in class activities and rarely complete homework. Additionally, high pupil-teacher ratios make individualized attention difficult, leading to slow progress. Socioeconomic challenges also play a role, as some pupils come to school hungry or lack

basic learning materials. To improve performance, we focus on engaging teaching methods, mentorship programs, and partnerships with parents to support pupils' learning at home."

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 2	(Constant)	2.831	.000		2.234	.000
	Disciplinary	1.029	.000	.016	1.516	.000
	School fees	0.813	.001	.022	0.184	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Academic performance

Correlational findings

Table 7: Correlation findings on school policies and academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District

		Disciplinary policies	School fees policies	Academic performance
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	0.673	0.431	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	120	120	120

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary (2023)

Table 7 showed that there was a good positive significant correlation ($r=0.673$, $\text{sig}=0.000$) between disciplinary policies and academic performance of primary pupils in Kamuli District. There was a weak positive significant correlation ($r=0.431$, $\text{sig}=0.000$) between school fees

policies and academic performance of primary pupils in Kamuli District. Therefore, disciplinary policies, curriculum policies, and school fees policies have a significant relationship with academic performance of pupils in selected primary schools in Kamuli District

Regression analysis of school management policies and academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District

Table 8: Regression findings on school management policies and academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1 Disciplinary	0.801 ^a	0.642	0.631
2 School fees	0.601 ^b	0.362	0.361

Source: Primary (2024).

Table 8 revealed that academic performance of pupils was 63.1% explained by disciplinary policies (Adjusted R Square = 0.631). The remaining 36.9% was explained by other variables that were outside the study. The regression model was also valid ($\text{sig } 0.000 < .05$). Therefore, having an efficient disciplinary committee, disciplinary actions, and procedures in primary schools significantly contributes to improving the behavior of pupils and academic performance in Kamuli District. Academic performance of primary

pupils in Kamuli District was 36.1% explained by school fees policies (Adjusted R Square = 0.41, $\text{sig}=0.000$). The remaining 63.9% was explained by other variables that were outside the study. The regression model was significant; hence, schools' fees policies affect the academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District. Generally, there is a significant relationship between school management policies and academic performance of primary pupils in Kamuli District.

Discussions of findings

Disciplinary policies and academic performance of pupils in selected primary schools in Kamuli District

The study's results, which show a fairly good positive significant correlation ($r=0.673$, $\text{sig}=0.000$) between disciplinary policies and academic performance, reinforce the argument that effective discipline contributes to better learning outcomes. (Gage et al., 2018) Emphasize that schools with well-structured and consistently enforced disciplinary policies experience fewer disruptions, leading to improved academic focus. This aligns with the findings in Kamuli District, where schools with clear and fair disciplinary measures recorded better academic performance. The structured environment allows pupils to concentrate on their studies, reducing distractions that could hinder their progress. Conversely, research by (Gilleskie & Li, 2022) highlights the negative impact of exclusionary discipline strategies, such as suspensions and expulsions, on academic outcomes. The study in Kamuli District supports this perspective, as schools that relied heavily on punitive measures reported lower academic achievements. The exclusion of pupils from learning environments due to harsh discipline results in missed instructional time and disengagement, ultimately lowering performance. (Bakashaba, 2024) provide evidence that positive discipline interventions, including proactive classroom management and social-emotional learning, enhance student behavior and academic success. This supports the study's findings, which suggest that schools in Kamuli District implementing supportive discipline strategies experienced higher academic performance. Effective classroom management strategies and a positive school climate. Furthermore, (Gregory et al., 2010) raise concerns about the disproportionate impact of punitive discipline on marginalized students, which may be relevant to the context of Kamuli District. Schools serving lower-income communities that relied on harsh disciplinary measures were likely to see a decline in academic outcomes. This suggests that disciplinary policies must be fair, inclusive, and supportive to ensure that all pupils, regardless of background, have equal opportunities to succeed.

School fees policies and academic performance of pupils in selected primary schools in Kamuli District

The findings from the study in Kamuli District, which show a fairly weak but significant positive correlation ($r=0.431$, $\text{sig}=0.000$) between school fees policies and academic performance, align with existing literature that explores the complex relationship between financial access to education and learning outcomes. While school fee policies do influence academic performance, the relatively weak correlation suggests that other factors, such as instructional quality, school infrastructure, and parental involvement, may also play a significant role in determining pupil achievement. (Nangonzi, 2024) Highlights the negative impact of high school fees on access to education, particularly for low-income families. This is relevant to Kamuli District, where many households struggle with

financial constraints, and any form of school fees such as contributions for meals or development projects can lead to irregular attendance and poor academic performance. The study suggests that reducing financial barriers could enhance access to education and improve pupil outcomes. Similarly, (Casely-Hayford et al., n.d.) found that lower school fees in Ghana contributed to higher enrollment rates and better academic performance among disadvantaged pupils. The study in Kamuli District supports this finding, as schools with minimal financial demands from parents tend to have higher attendance rates, ensuring that pupils receive continuous instruction, which contributes to better performance. However, the weak correlation suggests that lowering fees alone may not automatically lead to improved academic outcomes without addressing other educational challenges.

(Campbell, 2015) provide further insights into the consequences of high school fees, showing how they contribute to increased dropout rates and child labor, respectively. In Kamuli District, many pupils from low-income families face similar challenges, where financial burdens force them to miss school or even drop out to support their households. The study's findings suggest that while school fees policies play a role in determining academic performance, broader economic and social factors must also be considered to fully address the issue. On the other hand, (Barrera-Osorio & Raju, 2011) highlight the importance of targeted subsidies and fee waivers in promoting educational equity. This is relevant to Kamuli District, where government funding through the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program aims to remove financial barriers to learning. However, the study's weak correlation suggests that while free education policies help with enrollment and retention, they must be accompanied by quality teaching and adequate learning resources to significantly improve academic performance. Tooley & Dixon (2023) explore the role of education vouchers in Lagos, Nigeria, arguing that increased competition and school choice lead to better academic outcomes. In Kamuli District, while UPE provides free education, some parents opt for private schools, believing they offer higher-quality education. This suggests that financial policies alone are insufficient to drive academic excellence; rather, they must be complemented by quality assurance measures in both public and private schools.

Conclusions

First, the findings demonstrated a significant positive correlation between disciplinary policies and academic performance ($r=0.673$, $p=0.000$). This suggests that well-structured and effectively implemented disciplinary measures contribute to improved academic outcomes for primary school pupils in the district. The consistency in enforcement of rules and the promotion of a conducive learning environment appear to play a crucial role in enhancing students' academic achievements. Lastly, the

study showed a fairly weak positive correlation between school fees policies and academic performance ($r=0.673$, $p=0.000$). Although there is a significant positive relationship, the strength of this correlation was weaker compared to the other policies. This suggests that while school fee policies may have some influence on academic performance, other factors such as affordability, accessibility, and the quality of learning resources may play more significant roles in shaping students' performance.

Recommendation

Schools should adopt proactive discipline strategies such as counseling, peer mediation, and mentorship programs to encourage positive behavior rather than relying on punitive measures like suspensions and expulsions. Parents should be actively engaged in the discipline process through regular meetings, workshops, and collaborative interventions to reinforce positive behavior at home. Schools should improve transparency and accountability in the use of Universal Primary Education (UPE) funds to enhance the quality of education and minimize the need for additional parental contributions. Schools should minimize indirect financial burdens on parents, such as mandatory contributions for meals, uniforms, and school projects, to ensure that no child is denied education due to financial constraints.

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List of Abbreviations

UPE:	Universal Primary Education
ESDP:	Education Sector Development Plan
SCM:	School management committees
MoES:	Ministry of Education and Sports
PTMP:	Primary Teacher Management Policy
NCF:	National Curriculum Framework
PTA:	Primary Teachers Association
KDED:	Kamuli District Education Department

Source of funding

There is no source of funding.

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest declared.

Availability of data

Data used in this study is available upon request from the corresponding author

Author's contribution

FN designed the study, conducted data collection, cleaned and analyzed data, and drafted the manuscript. MS supervised all stages of the study from conceptualization of the topic to manuscript writing and submission.

Ethical approval

Permission was sought from the School of Graduate Studies and Research after defending the proposal, and an introductory letter to go with it in the field. Consent of the respondents to participate in the study and feel free to provide relevant information for the study was sought. Further informed the respondents about the purpose of the research project and the expected outcome of the study. Assured the respondents that the information provided was treated with maximum confidentiality, secrecy, and was only used for academic purposes. Further, the study credited and extended its gratitude to all previous researchers whose literature contributes to this study

Informed consent

A consent form was filled by the respondents after explaining the purpose of the study to them. The respondents were assured of confidentiality as no name would appear on the questionnaire. No participant was forced to participate in the study, and all the study materials used during the interviews were safely kept under lock and key, only accessible by the researcher.

Author's biography

Fatuma Nakiranda is a student of master's degree in education planning and management at School of Graduate Studies and Research, Team University.

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