

Exploring the Nexus between Poverty and Academic Performance: A Case Study in Lugazi Town Council, Mukono District, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Poverty remains a persistent challenge globally, affecting millions of individuals and families. In Uganda, poverty significantly influences various aspects of life, particularly education. This study investigates the intricate relationship between poverty and academic performance among learners in Lugazi town council, Mukono district, Uganda. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data was collected from teachers, students, and parents to comprehensively understand poverty's impact on education. Results reveal pronounced disparities in access to essential school facilities and resources due to financial constraints, including inadequate textbooks, classrooms, and practical materials. Moreover, limited staff development opportunities and large class sizes exacerbate teaching challenges, hindering effective learning. Poverty is found to be a key driver of high dropout rates among students, driven by the necessity to work, unfavorable school environments, hunger, lengthy commutes, and early marriages, particularly among girls. Additionally, poverty correlates with increased student indiscipline, including drug abuse and deviant behavior, further undermining the educational environment. This study underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to address structural challenges posed by poverty. Recommendations include increased funding for schools serving underprivileged communities, support for teacher training initiatives, and efforts to mitigate socioeconomic barriers to education. The findings emphasize the importance of fostering collaborative partnerships between government agencies, educators, parents, and community leaders to create a conducive learning environment that promotes academic achievement despite socioeconomic obstacles. Ultimately, addressing poverty's impact on education is essential for enhancing educational outcomes and reducing inequality in Uganda.

Keywords: Poverty, Academic Performance, Education, Uganda, Dropout Rates, School Facilities, Teacher Training, Socioeconomic Barriers, Collaborative Partnerships

INTRODUCTION

According to Sachs [1, 2], more than eight million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay alive. Their plight is hardly articulated because the public hardly comments about it. The poorest of the poor currently stand at about one-sixth of humanity. They live in extreme poverty and struggle daily for survival. In 2001, the World Bank estimated roughly 1.1 billion people were living in extreme poverty, down from 1.5 billion in 1981. Of these people, about 93% live in three regions: East Asia, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty has been on the increase in sub-Saharan Africa, while in East Asia and South Asia it has been decreasing. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa, almost half of the population is deemed to live in extreme poverty, and this proportion has been rising over the period [3]. In Uganda, poverty has been on the increase. For instance, in 1994, the welfare monitoring survey estimated the poverty index at

about 47.2%, while in 2004, it was estimated at about 56%. This is against the government of Uganda's commitment at the time of independence in 1963 to fight illiteracy, disease, ignorance, and poverty with a view to eradicating them and achieving sustainable development. A policy on poverty reduction was stated in sessional paper No. 10 of 1965 on African socialism and its application to planning in Uganda [4]. Several national development plans, sessional papers, presidential commissions, task forces, and studies in Uganda have ever addressed the issue of poverty. To date, poverty is still a challenge, and it is recognised as a major threat to a very significant section of Ugandan society, including education. However, this study was intended to determine the effects of poverty on the academic performance of learners in selected areas of Lugazi town council, Mukono district, Uganda.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is generally agreed that poverty can be defined in terms of three distinguishable degrees: extreme poverty, moderate poverty, and relative poverty. Extreme poverty means that households cannot meet basic needs for survival. Such individuals are perpetually hungry, unable to access healthcare, lack amenities like safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for their children, lack basic shelter, and some articles of clothing such as shoes. Extreme poverty occurs mainly in developing countries [5, 6]. Moderate poverty, on the other hand, generally refers to conditions of life in which basic needs are met, but just barely. Relative poverty is construed as a household income level below a given proportion of average national income. In high-income countries, it entails lack of access to cultural goods, entertainment, recreational activities, quality healthcare, education, and other prerequisites for upward social mobility [7].

In Uganda, poverty has been defined in terms of the condition in which poor people find themselves. In layman's understanding, poverty can be defined in its multidimensional nature, including inadequacy of income, deprivation of basic needs and rights, and lack of access to productive assets as well as to social infrastructure and markets [8–10]. According to the poverty reduction strategy paper for the period 2001–2004, the qualitative approach of measuring poverty defines the poor as those who cannot afford basic food and non-food items, while the qualitative approach defines poverty as the inability of people to meet their basic needs. It is associated with features such as lack of land, unemployment, inability to feed oneself and family, and lack of proper housing.

Causes of Poverty in Uganda

As reported in the poverty reduction strategy paper for the period 2001–2004 and the second participatory poverty assessment study in Uganda [11], the following are the causes of poverty in Uganda: The challenges faced by communities in the Uganda include low agricultural and livestock productivity, poor marketing, insecurity, unemployment, low wages, bad governance, land issues, inadequate roads, high costs of social services, HIV/AIDS, gender imbalance, disability, and lack of access to education and healthcare. Traditional farming methods, low soil fertility, droughts, floods, and inadequate extension services contribute to these issues. Insecurity can result from banditry, hijacking, raiding, stock theft, robbery, and looting. Unemployment and low wages are prevalent due to the lack of infrastructure for self-employment. Poor governance, including lack of transparency and accountability, contributes to these issues. Land

issues, such as landlessness and fragmentation, further exacerbate the situation. Inadequate roads and high costs of social services further exacerbate the situation. The lack of access to public utilities, healthcare, education, and vital information further exacerbates the situation.

Effects of Poverty on Provision of Quality Education

Having articulated the indicators of Quality Education in schools, it is noteworthy that all aspects of quality cannot be achieved because of the effects of poverty in financing education in Uganda, which include:

- Limited provision of school facilities, equipment, and materials, affecting the quality of teaching and learning [12].
- Less staff development and training opportunities.
- Poor nutrition and feeding habits in schools.
- Poor health among some students [13].
- Poor time management, especially when learning is interrupted as students are sent for fees in some schools.
- Exposure of students and staff to indiscipline.
- Exposure of students, parents, and staff to stressful situations [14–16].
- Creation of poor relations between the school and some parents.
- Creation of strained relations with the community.

The list of effects is extensive, depending on the nature and type of school and the environment in which the school is situated. For instance, schools in arid and semi-arid areas are more vulnerable compared to schools in high and medium economic potential areas. Similarly, schools attracting students from among the urban poor are more susceptible to poverty compared to school children of the well-to-do in society. Worst affected are girls in some communities where they may be denied education in favor of boys, or they may be married off to counter the perennial poverty in their homes as parents hope to receive some dowry [17–19]. Day schools are most affected, especially schools in low-income areas. Other schools attract very few students, such that they cannot enjoy economies of scale in financing educational activities and programs. The poorest of the poor may not access education services, while the non-poor seem to benefit from the cost-sharing arrangement in financing secondary education, thus escalating the gap between the rich and the poor in society [20]. The school is the most important functional point for achieving educational goals [21]. In Uganda, many children who enter the school system at the primary level do not complete the cycle; learners drop out at various stages of the education system. Several

factors are responsible for high dropout rates and hence low completion rates among primary school learners. Schools require learners to have uniforms, textbooks, stationary, and pay tuition, building fund, and activity fees. Due to the high cost of these items, children whose parents cannot

afford to provide all or most of these requirements are always under pressure from the school administrators. The frustrations these learners go through affect their academic performance, leading them to lose interest in education and eventually drop out [20].

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design since it was about explaining a scenario. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used [22].

Study Population

The study was carried out in Lugazi town council in Mukono district, Uganda. It involved students, teachers, and parents.

Sample Size

A total of eighty respondents were used from the total population of the schools that were used for this study, as illustrated by Table 1.

Table 1: Categories of Sample

Categories of Respondents	Sample
Teachers	20
Students	40
Parents	20
Total	80

Source: Primary data

Sample Technique

Using a convenient sampling technique, a total of eighty respondents were picked at random to participate in this study.

Sample Procedure

In carrying out research, the researcher first got a release letter from the course administrators, which he took to the schools under study. Then, the authority gave the researcher permission to access school information.

Methods for Data Collection

Questionnaires

These were used to collect information from some learners since these respondents are literate and are able to understand the language being used.

Interviews

Interviews were held with teachers and parents since they are busy and have no time to answer questionnaires.

Sources of Data

This study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides, which were given to learners, parents, and teachers, respectively. Secondary data was obtained through document analysis in the form of reports. Training manual, newspapers, and journals.

Data Processing and Analysis

Qualitative data involved three sets of activities, which included editing, coding, and frequency tabulations. The researcher then proceeded on to code the various responses given to particular questions that lacked coding frames. He then established how many times each alternative response category was given an answer using tally marks, which were later added up. The data was then presented in frequency tabulations.

RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

A total of 80 respondents were selected. The tables below show the various types of respondents that were selected.

Table 2: Respondents by Age

Age brackets	Frequency	Percentage
10—15	10	12.5
16—19	20	25.0
20- 25	15	18.75
26- 30	10	12.5
30- 35	20	25.0
40 and above	5	6.25
Total	80	100

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents were in the age brackets of 16–19 and 30–35, respectively.

Table 3: Respondents by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	45	56.25
Female	35	43.75
Total	80	100

Source: Primary data

According to Table 3, the male respondents were the majority (56.25%), and the female respondents were 43.75%.

Table 4: Educational level of respondents

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
None	5	6.25
Primary	15	18.75
Secondary	30	37.5
College/university	30	37.5
Total	80	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4 shows that the majority of the respondents, that is, 30 (37.5%), had secondary education and college education, respectively, while 15 (18.75%) had primary education and 5 (6.25%) had no education.

Effects of poverty on the academic performance of learners Research findings revealed that there is a significant effect of poverty on the academic performance of learners.

Limited provision of school facilities, equipment, and materials

The study revealed that due to poverty, school facilities and equipment materials were scarce, and therefore, the students did not perform well in class because they could not understand what the teachers were teaching. The findings relating to the limited provision of school facilities, equipment, and materials were captured and presented in percentages using frequency counts in the form of the table below.

Table 5: Availability of school facilities

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
1 We have enough text books.	30%	10%	60%
2 We have enough classrooms.	30%	14%	56%
3 Practical materials are enough.	21%	9%	70%
4 We have all the necessary laboratories.	44%	4%	51%
5 All learners have school uniforms.	40%	4%	51%
6 We have enough chairs and black Boards	60%	20%	20%

Source: Primary data

Table 6: Less staff development and training opportunities

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
1 We have a few teachers.	31%	9%	40%
2 We have a few trained teachers.	59%	19%	22%
3 Classes are large for the teachers.	60%	10	30 ⁰ /O
We do not understand anything since The classes are large.	51%	10	40
5 Teachers do not teach all lessons since They are few.	54%	14 ⁰ 0	30%
6 Because teachers are less paid, they get frustrated and don't teach well.	57%	7%	36%

Source: primary data

Table 7: Increased school dropout

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
Most learners drop out due to poverty.	70%	20%	10%
2 Children have to work at home before they come to school.	59%	19%	22%
The school environment is not good due to poverty, and hence students drop out.	60%	10%	30%
Children do not have what to eat and Study when hungry.	60%	15%	25%
5 The distances from home to school are Long-arid learners reach school when they are tired.	50%	20%	30%
Parents are poor, and therefore them Daughters drop out of school to get married so that they are paid dowry.	40%	5%	55%

Source: Primary Data

According to the table, 70% of learners drop out due to poverty, 59% have to work at home before they go to school, which makes them tired and therefore unable to concentrate in class, and 60% leave school because the school environment is not good, and this includes large classes with few instructional materials, among others. 50% agree that long distances for students are a burden, so students end up dropping out, and 40% say that parents forced girls to leave school early to get married due to poverty.

The study found that students from poor homes found it very difficult to cope with the school environment since they lacked many things that is, they did not have enough or good food to eat, they did not have school uniforms, and they were always sent home for school fees. These alone lead to frustration and the child hating the school environment, which therefore leads to school dropout.

Table 8: Exposure of learners and staff to indiscipline

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
1 Learners turn to drugs due to poverty.	80%	10%	10%
2 Learners turn to deviant behaviour.	59%	19%	22%
3 The teachers do not care about students. from poor	60%	10%	30%
4 Learners perform poorly in class because They lack materials.	40%	20%	40%
5 Children from poor families are the most undisciplined	40%	20%	40%
6 Because teachers are frustrated	60%	15%	25%

Source: Primary Data

The table clearly shows that learners who came from poor families are likely to abuse drugs because they are frustrated, and 80% agree with that. Teachers revealed that students who come from poor families are willing to study, but because of what they lack parental love, good food, and good clothes, among others they are discouraged and therefore turn to deviant behaviours.

The study also found out that due to poverty, the relationship between the teachers, parents, and students is not good since everyone is frustrated, the teachers are not well paid, and they look at the poor learners as the cause of all these, and the parents are frustrated since their children are always being sent home, and the students also get tired of all these. These are a hindrance to academic performance.

DISCUSSION

These findings provide a thorough picture of the respondents' demographics as well as the impact of poverty on discipline and academic achievement in a learning environment. The bulk of responders, approximately 60% of the sample overall, are between the ages of 16 and 19 and 30 and 35. This distribution captures both younger and older responders, indicating a highly varied age range

among them. Male respondents make up 56.25% of the sample, a greater proportion than female respondents. There seems to be a little imbalance in the gender distribution, with more men than women. The bulk of responders (37.5%) are college or university graduates and secondary school graduates. The proportion of responders with just a primary education is low, and the

proportion with no education is much lower. Due to poverty, the results show notable inequalities in the availability of school supplies and infrastructure.

It is obvious that there are not enough textbooks, labs, practical materials, classrooms, or even school clothes. The effectiveness of instruction and pupils' capacity to learn are probably impacted by the lack of resources. The results draw attention to problems including the shortage of qualified instructors and instructors overall. Educators may get frustrated due to large class sizes and poor teacher wages, which may have an effect on the quality of instruction and learning results for students[23–25].

School dropout rates seem to be significantly influenced by poverty. Dropout rates may be attributed to a variety of factors, such as the need for youngsters to work from home, unfavourable school conditions, starvation, lengthy commutes, and financial constraints that force young marriages, particularly among females[26]. These results highlight the many obstacles that students from low-income families must overcome in order to complete their education. There is a positive correlation between student indiscipline, including drug usage and deviant conduct, and poverty. Discipline problems are

The study highlights the direct relationship between poverty and academic performance in Ugandan learners. Education is considered the main exit route from poverty, but many poverty-stricken individuals continue to struggle. This has led to a widening gap between the rich and the poor, making them uncompetitive in the job market. The government of Uganda is making efforts to provide educational opportunities, particularly through tuition waivers in secondary schools. Recommendations include financing

made worse by the teachers' dissatisfaction with their low salary and the parents' and students' seeming lack of support. A hostile learning environment is exacerbated by the strained relationships between educators, parents, and students.

These findings highlight the intricate relationship between educational attainment and poverty. Poverty exacerbates disciplinary difficulties and impairs interpersonal connections within the school community in addition to affecting access to resources and facilities. The results highlight the need of focused interventions to address the structural issues that teachers and students in underprivileged areas confront. Increased financing for schools serving underprivileged communities, programs for teacher preparation and support, and efforts to lessen socioeconomic obstacles to education—like giving needy kids access to food, uniforms, and transportation—are a few examples of such interventions. Furthermore, encouraging cooperative relationships between stakeholders—parents, legislators, educators, and community leaders—can aid in developing a nurturing learning environment that supports students' achievement in spite of socioeconomic obstacles.

CONCLUSION

secondary education, encouraging community initiatives for school financing, setting up education insurance for the poor, diversifying income-generating activities at the school level, maintaining good relations with communities, and embracing school-based management. School leaders should also develop knowledge-based management skills to achieve educational goals for learners. Overall, these efforts aim to reduce the burden of financing education for the poor and improve the overall educational experience.

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