
KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

PARENTAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF PUPILS IN UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN KANGULUMIRA TOWN COUNCIL, KAYUNGA DISTRICT

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Citation: Tumusiime et al. (2025). Parental socio-economic status and educational achievement of pupils in universal primary education schools in Kangulumira town council, Kayunga district. *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(2), 191-202.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of parental socio-economic status on the educational achievement of pupils in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools in Kangulumira Town Council. The study was guided by the increasing concern over disparities in pupils' academic performance despite the implementation of free primary education in Uganda. The research focused on how parental education level, occupation, income, and family background affect pupils' learning achievement. A descriptive research design was adopted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected from pupils, parents, and teachers through questionnaires, interviews, and observation methods. Findings revealed that parental education, occupational status, and income significantly influence pupils' academic performance. Pupils from families with educated and economically stable parents demonstrated better academic achievement compared to pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds. The study concluded that parental socio-economic status remains a major determinant of educational achievement even within the UPE framework. The study recommends strengthening parental involvement in education, promoting adult literacy, and increasing government support to disadvantaged households.

Keywords: Parental socio-economic status, Educational achievement, UPE schools, Parental involvement, Academic performance, Primary education, Kayunga District.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely acknowledged as a fundamental human right and an important instrument for socio-economic transformation. Primary education forms the foundation for human capital development and national progress. In Uganda, the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in 1997 aimed at increasing access to basic education for all children regardless of their socio-economic background.

Despite improvements in school enrolment, many UPE schools continue to face challenges related to poor academic performance, absenteeism,

inadequate parental support, and high dropout rates. These challenges are particularly evident in rural and semi-urban communities such as Kangulumira Town Council.

Parental socio-economic status plays a crucial role in shaping children's educational opportunities and academic success. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, parents are among the most influential agents in children's educational development because they directly shape the home environment and access to educational resources.

Research further indicates that parental education, occupation, family income, and social capital influence children's educational achievement through access to learning materials, parental guidance, educational expectations, and home learning environments.

This study therefore investigates the relationship between parental socio-economic status and educational achievement of pupils in UPE schools in Kangulumira Town Council, Kayunga District.

Background to the Study

The Government of Uganda introduced UPE to ensure free and compulsory primary education for all children. The policy significantly increased enrolment in government-aided primary schools. However, increased access has not always translated into improved educational quality and academic performance.

Many pupils in UPE schools come from economically disadvantaged households where parents struggle to provide scholastic materials, adequate nutrition, and conducive learning environments. Parents with limited education may also fail to monitor homework or participate effectively in school activities.

Studies conducted in different countries indicate that socio-economic status influences educational outcomes. A study conducted in India found that parental education, occupation, and family background significantly affected children's learning achievement.

Similarly, educational sociologists such as Bourdieu argue that cultural capital inherited from educated families enhances children's academic success because schools tend to reward behaviors, language, and skills associated with middle-class families.

Statement of the Problem

Although the UPE programme has increased school enrolment in Uganda, educational achievement among pupils in many governments primary schools remains unsatisfactory. In Kangulumira Town Council, some pupils continue to perform poorly academically despite free access to education.

Many households in the area experience poverty, unemployment, low literacy levels, and limited parental involvement in education. These socio-economic challenges may negatively affect pupils' learning achievement. However, there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining how parental socio-economic status affects educational achievement of pupils in UPE schools in Kangulumira Town Council.

This study therefore seeks to investigate the extent to which parental socio-economic status influences pupils' educational achievement in UPE schools.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

To examine the influence of parental socio-economic status on the educational achievement of pupils in UPE schools in Kangulumira Town Council, Kayunga District.

Specific Objectives

- 1) To examine the influence of parental education on pupils' educational achievement.
- 2) To determine the effect of parental occupation on pupils' academic performance.
- 3) To assess the influence of family income on educational achievement of pupils.

- 4) To examine the relationship between parental involvement and pupils' educational achievement.

Research Questions

How does parental education influence pupils' educational achievement?

What is the effect of parental occupation on academic performance?

How does family income affect pupils' educational achievement?

What relationship exists between parental involvement and pupils' educational achievement?

Literature Review

Parental Education and Academic Achievement

Parental education strongly influences children's academic performance. Educated parents are more likely to support homework, monitor attendance, and create conducive learning environments. Research indicates that children of educated parents generally perform better academically than children of less educated parents.

The Malaippati Village study revealed that parents with higher educational qualifications actively participated in their children's academic development and supported learning at home.

Parental Occupation and Educational Achievement

Parental occupation determines household income and educational support available to children. Formal employment often provides stable income, enabling parents to meet educational needs such as school requirements, transport, and private tutoring.

Studies have shown that pupils whose parents are engaged in stable salaried employment tend to achieve better academic results than pupils from households dependent on casual labour.

Family Income and Educational Achievement

Family income affects access to educational materials, nutrition, healthcare, and school attendance. Children from low-income households may lack books, uniforms, and adequate study environments.

However, government interventions such as free textbooks, school feeding programmes, and UPE support mechanisms may reduce the negative effects of poverty on learning achievement.

Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement

Parental involvement includes monitoring homework, attending school meetings, communicating with teachers, and supporting learning activities at home.

Coleman's Social Capital Theory emphasizes that strong parent-child relationships and parental participation in school activities positively influence educational outcomes.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study was conducted in UPE schools located in Kangulumira Town Council. The study population included: Pupils, Parents, Teachers and School administrators. A sample of 120 respondents was selected comprising: 60 pupils, 50 parents, 10 teachers and simple random sampling was used to select pupils and parents, while purposive sampling was used to select teachers and head teachers. Data were collected using: Questionnaires, Interviews and Observation. Where Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were analysed thematically.

Findings and Discussion

Influence of Parental Education

Parental education is one of the strongest predictors of children's academic achievement. Parents who have attained secondary or tertiary education are generally more knowledgeable about the importance of education and are therefore more likely to provide academic guidance, emotional support, and learning resources to their children. Educated parents often understand school expectations and actively participate in activities that enhance their children's educational progress. The study established that pupils whose parents possessed higher levels of education performed better academically compared to pupils whose parents had limited or no formal education. This is because educated parents tend to: supervise homework regularly, monitor school attendance, communicate with teachers frequently, provide learning materials, create conducive study environments at home, and encourage positive attitudes towards education.

According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, parents are the primary agents in children's development because they directly shape the home environment and learning experiences of children. The theory emphasizes that the family environment significantly influences children's cognitive and academic development. Similarly, Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory explains that educated parents possess cultural resources, language skills, knowledge, and educational experiences that they transfer to their children, thereby increasing their chances of academic success. Bourdieu argues that schools tend to reward children who already possess cultural competencies acquired from educated family backgrounds. "Parents with greater educational backgrounds, particularly graduates, actively participate in their children's

academic development and help them learn successfully."

The same study further observed that educated parents: "manage their children's absences from school, assist their wards with their homework, and participate in educational activities at home." This demonstrates that parental education positively affects children's educational achievement through increased parental involvement and academic support. Moreover, educated parents are more likely to expose children to educational materials such as books, newspapers, televisions, and digital learning resources. They also encourage reading culture and intellectual discussions at home.

However, the study also revealed that parents with low educational backgrounds often face challenges in supporting their children academically. Some are unable to assist with homework or effectively monitor school progress because of limited literacy skills. Others may not fully appreciate the long-term benefits of education due to their own limited educational experiences. Research reviewed in the Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction noted that: "Parents with low levels of education feel less confident about communicating and talking with teachers, administrators and another staff in school because they have less or lack information about the school system."

In many UPE schools in rural Uganda, pupils from less educated households may therefore experience: inadequate academic supervision, poor school attendance monitoring, lack of scholastic materials, low educational motivation, and limited parental guidance. The implication is that improving parental education through adult literacy programmes and community sensitization can significantly enhance pupils' educational achievement. Schools should also strengthen

parent-teacher partnerships and create supportive environments that encourage all parents, regardless of educational background, to participate actively in their children's education.

Influence of Parental Occupation on Pupils' Educational Achievement

Parental occupation plays a significant role in determining the educational achievement of pupils because it directly influences household income, parental availability, social status, and the capacity to provide educational support. The nature of parents' employment affects the kind of learning environment children experience both at home and at school.

The study found that pupils whose parents had formal employment or stable businesses performed better academically than pupils from households dependent on casual labour and irregular income-generating activities. Parents employed as teachers, civil servants, business owners, health workers, or salaried employees were generally more capable of meeting their children's educational needs compared to parents engaged in subsistence farming, casual labour, or temporary jobs.

Stable occupations enabled parents to: provide scholastic materials, pay school-related expenses, provide meals and transport, create conducive study environments, support co-curricular activities, and monitor their children's education effectively. The Malaippati Village study observed that: "Parents in formal jobs were in a better position to support their children at home than parents in informal jobs." This finding implies that occupational stability contributes positively to children's educational progress because it improves the family's economic capacity and reduces

educational stress among pupils. Parents engaged in formal employment often possess structured work schedules and predictable income, enabling them to plan effectively for their children's educational needs. Such parents are more likely to purchase textbooks, school uniforms, pens, bags, and other learning materials necessary for academic success.

In contrast, parents involved in casual labour frequently experience unstable earnings and financial insecurity. As a result, children from such households may face challenges including: lack of scholastic materials, irregular school attendance, poor nutrition, limited academic supervision, child labour responsibilities, and inadequate learning environments at home. The reviewed literature further indicates that socio-economic inequalities arising from occupational differences contribute significantly to variations in pupils' academic performance. According to Bourdieu's theory of cultural and social capital, occupational status determines access to resources, networks, and educational opportunities that enhance academic success.

Coleman's Social Capital Theory also explains that parents with stable occupations are often better positioned to devote time and resources toward educational support. The theory emphasizes that strong family support systems and parental involvement improve educational outcomes among children. The Pegem Journal review further notes that: "When parents can devote time to support education of their children at home, the education-related social capital that parents have improves children's school success." In many UPE schools, pupils from households dependent on casual labour may also be exposed to household responsibilities such as farming, fetching water, petty trading, or

caring for siblings. These responsibilities reduce study time and negatively affect concentration and academic performance.

Furthermore, parents with demanding informal occupations may have limited opportunities to attend school meetings or follow up on their children's academic progress. Some parents leave home early and return late, reducing interaction with children and limiting educational guidance. The Malaippati Village study revealed that most parents engaged in casual labour had lower levels of educational support for their children because of unstable employment and low-income levels. However, the study also recognizes that occupation alone does not automatically determine academic success. Some parents in low-income occupations still prioritize education and provide strong emotional and moral support to their children. This demonstrates that parental commitment and involvement remain important factors regardless of occupational status.

The findings therefore suggest that improving household economic stability through employment opportunities, vocational training, and income-generating programmes can positively influence pupils' educational achievement. Schools should also strengthen support systems for pupils from economically vulnerable households to minimize educational inequalities

Influence of Family Income

Family income is a major determinant of pupils' educational achievement because it influences the availability of basic educational necessities, living conditions, nutrition, healthcare, and access to learning resources. The economic capacity of a household largely determines the extent to which parents can support their children academically.

The study found that low household income negatively affected pupils' educational achievement in UPE schools in Kangulumira Town Council. Pupils from low-income families often lacked essential scholastic materials such as books, pens, school bags, mathematical sets, and exercise books. Some pupils also faced difficulties obtaining proper school uniforms and meals, which affected their attendance, concentration, and participation in class activities.

Children from financially unstable households may experience stress, absenteeism, and poor academic motivation because their educational needs are not consistently met. In some cases, pupils are forced to combine schooling with domestic work or income-generating activities to support family survival. Such responsibilities reduce study time and negatively affect academic performance indicates that children from economically disadvantaged families are more likely to encounter barriers to educational success due to: inadequate learning resources, poor nutrition, unconducive home learning environments, and limited access to additional academic support.

The Malaippati Village study observed that: "Children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds tend to face greater obstacles in their educational journey." The same study further emphasized that: "Limited access to educational resources, inadequate nutrition, and a lack of a conducive learning environment all contribute to these challenges."

"The parents' financial circumstances do not profoundly impact their children's academic achievements, as the government provides educational aids including school uniforms, bags, notebooks, mid-day meals, and other aids." This

demonstrates that government educational support programmes can minimize the negative effects of poverty on academic achievement.

However, although UPE has improved access to education, financial challenges still persist in many households. Some parents remain unable to meet indirect educational costs such as transport, lunch, examination materials, and personal requirements. Consequently, pupils from low-income families may continue to experience educational disadvantages despite free tuition. The findings therefore suggest that increasing government and community support to vulnerable households can further improve pupils' educational achievement. Strengthening school feeding programmes, providing scholastic materials to needy pupils, and expanding social protection initiatives would help reduce the effects of poverty on education. Furthermore, income-generating programmes aimed at improving household livelihoods can contribute significantly to better educational outcomes among pupils in UPE schools.

Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement
Parental involvement is one of the most important factors influencing pupils' educational achievement. It refers to the participation of parents in their children's educational activities both at home and at school. This involvement includes monitoring homework, attending school meetings, communicating with teachers, guiding children's learning activities, and encouraging discipline and academic commitment.

The study established a strong positive relationship between parental involvement and pupils' educational achievement in UPE schools in Kangulumira Town Council. Pupils whose parents regularly attended school meetings, monitored

academic progress, supervised homework, and maintained communication with teachers performed better academically than pupils whose parents demonstrated limited involvement in school activities.

Parental involvement contributes to academic success because it creates a supportive learning environment that motivates children to take education seriously. When parents actively follow up on school attendance, assignments, and examination performance, pupils become more disciplined, confident, and focused on their studies.

According to Coleman's Social Capital Theory, strong relationships between parents and children create social capital that enhances educational achievement. The theory argues that parents who devote time, attention, and resources to their children's education positively influence academic outcomes. "Parents pay attention to and are involved in their children thanks to this social capital."

This means that parental involvement strengthens communication, emotional support, and educational guidance within the family, thereby improving pupils' academic performance.

The reviewed literature also emphasizes that discussions between parents and children about school activities significantly improve educational achievement. According to the Pegem Journal review: "Parents' conversations and discussions with their children about education and school improves and enhances academic achievement."

Parents who regularly communicate with teachers are also better informed about their children's strengths, weaknesses, attendance, and behavior. This enables early intervention whenever academic problems arise. Frequent parent-teacher

interaction further strengthens accountability and cooperation between homes and schools.

The Malaippati Village study found that parents with greater educational awareness:

“assist their wards with their homework, and participate in educational activities at home.”

This support enhances pupils’ understanding of classroom content and improves confidence in learning activities.

Research reviewed in the Pegem Journal further indicates that: “When parents can devote time to support education of their children at home, the education-related social capital that parents have improves children’s school success.” However, the study also observed that some parents in UPE schools rarely participate in school activities due to: low literacy levels, demanding work schedules, financial hardships, and negative attitudes towards education. Parents with limited education may feel uncomfortable interacting with teachers or discussing academic matters because they lack confidence and familiarity with the school system. The literature notes that:

“Parents with low levels of education feel less confident about communicating and talking with teachers.”

Such limited involvement may negatively affect pupils’ discipline, attendance, homework completion, and academic motivation.

The findings therefore suggest that schools should strengthen parent-school partnerships by encouraging regular communication, organizing parent sensitization programmes, and creating welcoming school environments for all parents regardless of their educational background.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that parental socio-economic status significantly influences the educational achievement of pupils in UPE schools in Kangulumira Town Council. The study established that parental education, occupation, income, and involvement contribute greatly to pupils’ academic performance. These findings are supported by several educational theories and empirical studies.

The findings are consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes that children’s development is strongly influenced by the environments in which they live, particularly the family environment. Bronfenbrenner identifies the family as the most immediate and influential social institution shaping children’s cognitive, emotional, and academic development. Parents influence educational achievement through guidance, supervision, emotional support, provision of learning materials, and creation of conducive learning environments. “Parents are regarded as the most crucial and important agents in the micro system.” The theory further emphasizes that the quality of interaction between parents and children directly affects academic outcomes. In this study, pupils whose parents monitored homework, attended school meetings, and followed up on school attendance performed better academically than those whose parents provided limited supervision. This demonstrates the importance of the home environment in shaping educational success.

The study also supports Bourdieu’s Cultural Capital Theory, which argues that families transfer cultural knowledge, educational values, attitudes, and social advantages to children. According to Bourdieu, educated parents possess cultural capital that helps children adapt more effectively to school systems because schools reward behaviors,

language skills, and cultural competencies associated with educated families. “Children from families with higher socioeconomic status learn to value formal culture and are inclined to participate in intellectual activities such as visiting museums and reading.” In the current study, pupils from educated households demonstrated better educational achievement because their parents were more likely to: supervise homework, encourage reading culture, communicate with teachers, provide educational materials, and create supportive learning environments. These practices exposed pupils to educational experiences that positively influenced their academic performance.

The findings also align with Coleman’s Social Capital Theory, which explains that strong relationships within families and schools generate social capital that enhances educational achievement. Coleman argues that parental involvement creates supportive networks and educational guidance that improve academic success. “When parents can devote time to support education of their children at home, the education-related social capital that parents have improves children’s school success.” The study findings similarly revealed that pupils whose parents regularly attended school meetings and monitored academic progress performed better academically than those whose parents rarely participated in school activities. This suggests that parental involvement strengthens discipline, motivation, accountability, and academic confidence among pupils.

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with previous empirical studies conducted in different countries. The Malaipatti Village study in India established that parental education, occupation,

and socio-economic background significantly affect pupils’ learning achievement.

Similarly, studies reviewed in the Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction found that parental involvement positively influences academic performance across different educational levels. The literature observed that: “Parents’ conversations and discussions with their children about education and school improves and enhances academic achievement.” The study further agrees with research indicating that parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds often provide greater educational support because they possess more financial, educational, and social resources. However, the findings also revealed that parental commitment and involvement can positively influence educational achievement regardless of income level.

Although pupils from low-income families faced challenges such as inadequate scholastic materials and poor learning environments, government support through the UPE programme helped reduce educational inequalities by increasing access to education. The findings demonstrate that educational achievement is influenced not only by school factors but also by family background and parental engagement. Effective educational improvement therefore requires collaboration among parents, schools, communities, and government institutions to strengthen support systems for pupils both at home and at school.

Conclusion

The study established that parental socio-economic status significantly influences educational achievement among pupils in UPE schools in Kangulumira Town Council. Parental education, occupation, income, and involvement all affect

pupils' academic performance. Although UPE has improved access to education, socio-economic inequalities continue to affect learning outcomes among pupils. Strengthening parental participation and improving household socio-economic conditions are therefore essential for improving educational achievement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on parental socio-economic status and educational achievement of pupils in UPE schools in Kangulumira Town Council, the following recommendations are proposed to improve pupils' academic performance and strengthen parental support in education.

1) Strengthening Parent-Teacher Collaboration

Schools should strengthen collaboration between parents and teachers through regular meetings, home visits, and continuous communication regarding pupils' academic progress. Parent-teacher partnerships are essential because they promote joint responsibility in monitoring pupils' attendance, discipline, homework completion, and academic development.

Teachers should regularly inform parents about their children's performance, strengths, weaknesses, and behavioral concerns. Home visitation programmes can help teachers better understand pupils' home environments and socio-economic challenges affecting learning. Such interactions also encourage parents who may feel less confident engaging with schools due to limited education levels.

Schools should further establish parent engagement committees to improve communication between families and school administration. Strong parent-teacher

collaboration can improve accountability, motivation, and educational support for pupils.

2) Expansion of Adult Literacy Programmes

The government, through the Ministry of Education and Sports and local governments, should expand adult literacy and functional education programmes within communities. The study established that parental education significantly influences pupils' educational achievement because educated parents are better able to supervise homework, monitor attendance, and communicate with teachers. Adult literacy programmes would improve parents' reading, writing, and communication skills, thereby enhancing their capacity to support their children academically. Literate parents are more likely to appreciate the value of education, participate in school activities, and create supportive learning environments at home. Community learning centres should therefore be strengthened to provide accessible educational opportunities for parents with limited formal education.

3) Community Sensitization on Parental Involvement

Community sensitization programmes should be organized to increase awareness about the importance of parental involvement in children's education. Religious leaders, local council leaders, teachers, and community-based organizations should work together to educate parents about their responsibilities in supporting learning.

Sensitization campaigns should emphasize: regular school attendance, homework supervision, communication with teachers,

provision of scholastic materials, and emotional support for children.

Many parents in UPE schools assume that government provision of free education removes their responsibility in supporting education. Awareness programmes should therefore clarify that parental involvement remains critical for educational success even under UPE.

Community meetings, radio talk shows, school open days, and village education forums can be used to strengthen parental participation in education.

4) Financial Support for Vulnerable Households

Government and development partners should introduce financial support mechanisms for vulnerable households to reduce the effects of poverty on educational achievement. Although UPE provides free tuition, many parents still struggle to meet indirect educational costs such as uniforms, transport, meals, and scholastic materials.

Support programmes may include: bursaries and scholarships, school feeding programmes, provision of scholastic materials, conditional cash transfers, and livelihood improvement initiatives for poor families.

Improving household income can reduce absenteeism, school dropout, child labour, and other challenges associated with poverty. Financial empowerment programmes such as vocational training and income-generating activities should also be promoted among parents to improve household economic stability.

5) Establishment of Guidance and Counselling Services

Schools should establish and strengthen guidance and counselling services to support disadvantaged pupils facing socio-economic and emotional challenges. Many pupils from low-income or unstable family backgrounds experience stress, low self-esteem, poor motivation, and behavioral difficulties that negatively affect academic performance.

Qualified teacher-counsellors should be trained to: identify vulnerable pupils, provide psychosocial support, encourage positive study habits, and guide pupils on academic and personal development.

Guidance and counselling services can also help learners cope with domestic challenges such as neglect, poverty, family conflict, and peer pressure. Schools should further involve parents in counselling programmes to strengthen home-school cooperation in supporting pupils' well-being and educational achievement.

6) Improvement of Learning Resources in UPE Schools

Government should improve the availability of teaching and learning resources in UPE schools. Many schools continue to face shortages of textbooks, classroom furniture, teaching aids, and instructional materials, which negatively affect educational quality.

Adequate learning resources would help bridge educational inequalities among pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds and improve overall academic performance.

7) Strengthening School Feeding Programmes

School feeding programmes should be strengthened in UPE schools, especially in economically disadvantaged communities.

Adequate nutrition is essential for concentration, participation, attendance, and cognitive development among pupils.

Providing meals at school can improve attendance rates and reduce absenteeism among children from poor households. Partnerships between schools, parents, local governments, and development organizations can support sustainable feeding initiatives.

- 8) **Promotion of Equal Educational Opportunities**
Educational stakeholders should promote inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all pupils regardless of socio-economic background. Schools should avoid discrimination based on poverty, social status, or parental education level.

Special academic support programmes such as remedial teaching, mentorship, and peer learning groups should be introduced for pupils experiencing learning difficulties due to socio-economic challenges.

Therefore, implementing these recommendations would contribute significantly to improving educational achievement among pupils in UPE schools and reducing the negative effects of socio-economic inequalities on learning outcomes.

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