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ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND THE DISCIPLINE OF LEARNERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KIRUHURA DISTRICT, WESTERN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the connection between academic achievement and the discipline of learners in secondary schools in Kiruhura District, Uganda. The objectives of the study were to establish the relationship between academic achievement and the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district, western Uganda. A cross-sectional research design and mixed-methods approach were employed. The target population was 2758 individuals comprising 2579 learners, 7 head teachers, and 172 teachers. The sample size was 349, determined using Slovic's formula. Seven schools and head teachers were purposively selected, and 321 learners and 21 teachers were selected using simple random and stratified sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires. Content validity index and Cronbach's alpha were used to determine the validity and reliability of quantitative data, recording was used to guarantee the reliability of quantitative data. Additionally, the data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and summary tables. Inferential analysis showed significant relationships between discipline and academic achievement ($r = .21$, $p = .043$). The study concluded that academic achievement and the discipline of learners. The study recommended that, since academic achievement is significantly related to the discipline of learners, the Ministry of Education and sports should come up with a curriculum that meets the needs of all learners.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Discipline of Learners, Secondary Schools, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

The historical view of discipline in secondary schools has changed throughout time to reflect shifts in educational philosophies, student behavior techniques, and societal standards (Burden, 2020). According to

Glaser (2019), Strict Authority and Corporal Punishment; Transition to Progressive Education; Student Activism and the Civil Rights Movement; Zero Tolerance Policies; Restorative Justice and Positive Behavior

Interventions; Cyberbullying and Online Behavior; Social Emotional Learning and Trauma-Informed Practices are some of the historical developments in secondary school discipline (Bartlett, Law, Schugurensky, Díaz & Wolfersteig, 2021).

Guidance and counseling in schools play a crucial role in shaping the behavior, emotional well-being, and academic performance of students. In the context of Uganda, particularly in districts like Kiruhura, guidance and counseling programs are seen as a mechanism for promoting student discipline and overall development. The concept of guidance and counseling in education refers to the professional support services provided to students to help them understand themselves better, make informed decisions about their academic and personal lives, and manage social or emotional challenges (Muganda, 2022). These services typically include academic counseling, career guidance, psycho-social support, and behavioral counseling. The integration of guidance and counseling into the school curriculum is increasingly recognized as a critical intervention to prevent behavioral problems and improve the academic outcomes of learners (Mutisya, 2023).

Learners in Kiruhura district public secondary schools frequently struggle with emotional and social issues (Nimusiima, 2022). These adolescents require emotional support and direction as well as a secure environment in which to express themselves (Wang & Kuo, 2019). Their conduct and academic

achievement may benefit from this. According to Nimusiima (2022), schools respond to behavioral problems rather than implementing preventive education programs that provide learners the information and abilities they need to make wise decisions. According to Achilles (2021), workshops on coping mechanisms, decision-making, and conflict resolution may fall under this category.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the effort made by the Ministry of education to manage discipline of learners in secondary schools as evidenced by establishment of guidance and counseling departments in every secondary school, cases of indiscipline of varied nature continue in these schools, with a new dimension, (Bagaya & Mbabazi, 2019). In secondary schools in the Kiruhura district, there is little to no collaborative approach to handling student discipline (Nimusiima, 2022). Disruptive behaviors in the classroom, like talking out of turn and showing contempt for the teachers, are persistent (Burden, 2020). Lower academic attainment, a poor school culture, and a lack of concentration on learning are the results of this disruptive behavior, greater absenteeism and dropout rates among learners, demoralizing teachers, make it difficult to sustain a productive and positive learning environment (Mbabazi & Bagaya, 2019).

The level of indiscipline cases in Kiruhura district secondary schools has become a

matter of concern in recent years to all stake holders (Nimusiima, 2022). Sources from district education office (2019) indicate that for the last three years, cases of learners' indiscipline have been on the rise. According to Kyayemagye & Kintu (2020), over 10 (ten) schools have had a major indiscipline case and caused harm to the learners, Teachers and parents. Resources of unknown value have been destroyed. Although guidance and counseling is supposed to help alleviate the deteriorating discipline situation, the use of guidance and counseling in enhancing learners' discipline in Kiruhura Secondary schools is wanting (Achilles, 2021).

If the current trend of educational waste is not reversed, Kiruhura district will lose an entire generation. The children may become unemployed as a result of the increased dropout rates and decreased academic achievement (Nimusiima, 2022). This suggests that Kiruhura will be reliant on skilled laborers from nearby areas. In Kiruhura district, there may also be a rise in domestic crime and poverty (Bafaki, 2021). This context informs the research's goal to better understand how guidance and counseling might improve learners' conduct in secondary schools in the Kiruhura district.

Objective

The study was guided by the following objective:

To establish the relationship between academic achievement and the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district, western Uganda.

Research Question

What is the relationship between academic achievement and the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district, Western Uganda?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between academic achievement and the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district, Western Uganda.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

Theoretical reviews provide frameworks for understanding key concepts in the research study. This section outlines the relevant theories that help explain the role of guidance and counseling in shaping the discipline of learners, particularly in public secondary schools in Kiruhura District, Western Uganda. These theories guide the formulation of the research objectives, methods, and interpretation of findings.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement, as influenced by guidance and counseling, is a complex construct impacted by various psychological, educational, and sociological factors. According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, social interactions and the role of more knowledgeable individuals (e.g., teachers, counselors, and peers) are critical in learners' cognitive and academic development (Abu Mady, 2019). In the context of the current study, guidance and counseling can foster a supportive learning

environment, facilitating academic achievement by improving students' social and cognitive interactions.

Conceptual Framework

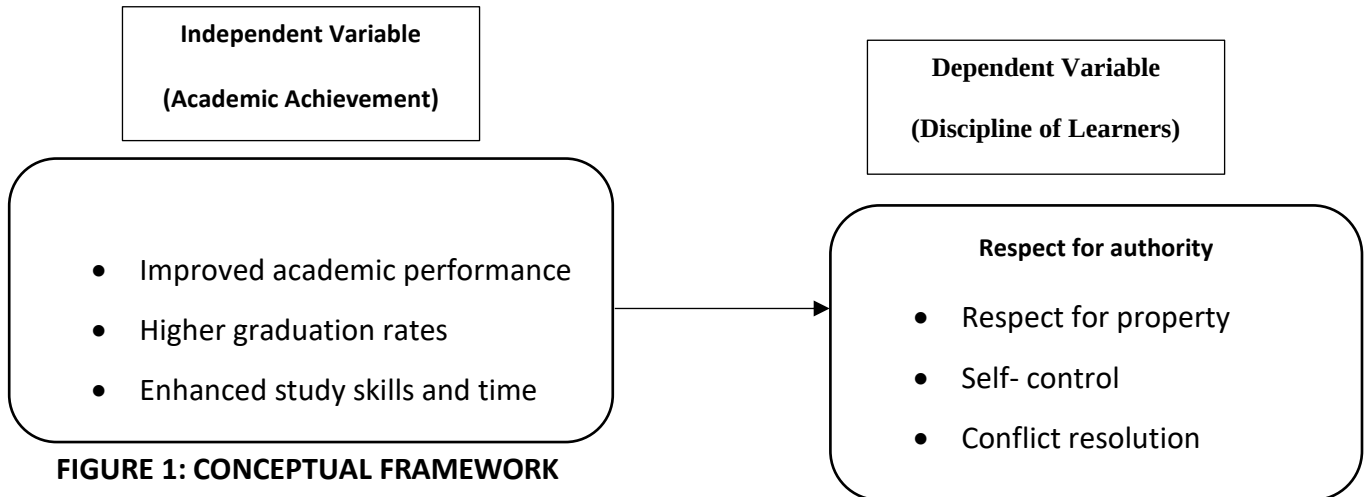


FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Empirical Studies

An empirical literature review, sometimes referred to as a systematic literature review, examines earlier empirical studies to address a particular research subject (Lewis, Boyd, Walsh-Bailey, Lyon, Beidas, Mittman & Chambers, 2020). A summary of earlier research on a specific area of interest is called a literature review. The purpose of the literature review is to identify any gaps in the body of knowledge (Chambers et al, 2020). The literature evaluation influences the theoretical underpinnings of the research in part. Creating the literature review for the empirical paper (Newman, Obschonka, Schwarz, Cohen, & Nielsen, 2019). In this section, the author looks at the theories and information that are currently known about the topic as well as its historical context (Newman et al, 2019).

Academic Achievement and Discipline of Learners

Academic achievement and learner discipline have been widely studied to understand their relationship and the factors influencing them. According to Anderson, Ritter, and Zamarro (2019), disciplined students who practice effective time management, consistent assignment completion, and active class participation tend to achieve better academic performance. The study, conducted in the United States using a quantitative research design with a sample of 1,500 secondary school students selected through random sampling, found that students who avoid procrastination and manage their study schedules efficiently perform better academically. The study recommends that educational institutions should focus on fostering student discipline through

structured guidance programs to help students set academic goals and develop positive study habits (Anderson, Ritter, & Zamarro, 2019).

In a study conducted by Ehiane, O. Stanley on Discipline and Academic Performance- A Study of Selected Secondary Schools in Lagos, Nigeria in 2014, it was established that discipline of learners had an impact on academic performance (Otara et al, 2019). Observance of time has a positive impact on academic performance; rules and regulations have an effect on academic performance; and punishment does not improve academic performance (Omolo, Simatwa & Otara, 2019). The study recommended that strict adherence to time management and a powerful disciplinary committee be put in place, and that a counselor chair such committees.

Matters arising from this study include: mixed method study; sample size 400; location Nigeria; research instrument questionnaire implied; qualitative data collection instrument not considered; quantitative data analysis done by use of Chi-square test, squared (Boccia, & Sarnacchiaro, 2020). Findings from the study: time management had a positive impact on academic performance; rules and regulations affect academic performance; and punishment does not improve academic performance (Watson et al, 2020). This study did not consider the use of counseling as an alternative to punishment and further recommended refusal of counselors from chairing disciplinary committees (Boccia et

al, 2020). This study will give prominence to guidance and counseling in raising academic achievement by helping learners overcome discipline challenges they face.

Research Gaps

In the context of academic achievement, for example, the study by Ehiane (2014) did not consider counseling as an alternative to punishment. Similarly, the study by Dama (2018) on life skills development did not include grade 9 learners in the sample, which could have provided valuable insights into the early stages of career guidance.

Methodology

Research Design

According to Mweshi and Sakyi (2020), other features of the cross-sectional research design that made the researcher choose it for this study include: the ability to collect the quantitative data the ability to observe and gather data without changing variables in order to characterize or analyze the current state of the population; the fact that cross-sectional studies are typically faster and less expensive than longitudinal studies because they do not require participants to be followed for an extended period of time. According to Mweshi & Sakyi (2020), the ability to explore associations between variables and determine the prevalence of a specific condition or behavior within a population. Research Approach

A researcher's method or plan of action for carrying out an investigation and compiling pertinent data is referred to as a research

approach (Hancock, Algozzine, & Lim, 2021). It entails making choices on the design, methodologies, and procedures to be employed in the research process and is a methodical approach to solving a research issue or problem (Taherdoost, 2021).

Target Population

Head teachers, educators, and learners (leaners) from the following seven public secondary schools in the Kiruhura district

made up the target population. A total of 2758 was made up of 172 teachers, 7 head teachers, and 2579 leaners. 340, 22, and 1 from School A; 388, 25, and 1 from School B; 622, 36, and 1 from School C; 338, 21, and 1 from School D; 120, 18, and 1 from School E; 488, 31, and 1 from School F; and 283, 19 and 1 from School G comprised the population of leaners, teachers, and head teachers.

Table 1: Target Population

School	Head Teachers	Teachers	Leaners	Total
A	1	22	340	363
B	1	25	388	414
C	1	36	622	659
D	1	21	338	360
E	1	18	120	139
F	1	31	488	520
G	1	19	283	303
Total	7	172	2579	2758

Source: Primary Data

Sample Size

Samples of teachers and learners from each school were determined proportionately as explained in the sampling procedure

(section 3.7). Table 2 shows the sample size of each category of respondents from each of the seven schools that were surveyed.

TABLE 1. SAMPLE SIZE

School	Head Teachers	Teachers	Leaners	Total
A	1	3	42	46
B	1	3	48	52
C	1	4	78	83
D	1	3	42	46

E	1	2	15	18
F	1	4	61	66
G	1	2	35	38
Total	7	21	321	349

Source: Primary Data

Sampling Methods

The sample was selected using two techniques: simple random sampling and purposive sampling. Simple random sampling was utilized to choose learners, where each individual was randomly selected from a sampling frame containing the names of participating teachers. This method was preferred because it facilitates the generalization of the findings (Fricker, 2017). Only learners were chosen through simple random sampling. Conversely, teacher and head teachers were selected using purposive sampling. This approach focused on identifying specific individuals to provide detailed insights, given the study's quantitative (Ames, Glenton & Lewin, 2019). Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select a limited number of rich cases that offered comprehensive information and understanding of the phenomenon of interest. The individuals chosen through purposive sampling were teachers and head teachers.

Sampling Procedure

To obtain the teachers and learners' sample, the number of head teachers was subtracted from the sample of 349, which gave 342. This number represented the teachers and learners in the sample.

Data Collection Instruments.

In this study, self-administered questionnaires (SAQ) were employed. A, B, C, and D were the portions that consisted of. The demographics of the respondents were covered in Section A. The dependent variable was covered in Section B, and Section C was broken down into three subsections: C1, C2, and C3. Academic accomplishment is the focus of C1, job development is the focus of C2, and parent and community involvement were the focus of C3. Government policies covered in Section D. A 4-point Likert scale was used to rate the items in sections B, C, and D. A 4-point Likert scale was used in order to discourage respondents remaining neutral since the study was not sensitive. Three hundred twenty-one learners and twenty-one teachers received the questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedure

A letter of introduction from the Directorate of Higher Degrees and Research was what the researcher obtained. This letter introduced the researcher to the schools where the data collection took collected. The researcher introduced himself to the teachers and learners after delivering the letter to the head teachers. Every head teacher received a briefing about the importance of the study, the day, and the time of the instrument

distribution. The researcher distributed the questionnaires in person after getting approval from each of the selected respondents. A note explaining the overall purpose of the study was included with each questionnaire.

Data quality control

Quality control refers to any process that aims to monitor and maintain standards in the data collection methods (Montgomery, 2019). It was essential to maintain the sustainability and authenticity of data. Every action taken with the data after it had been collected increased the chance that errors could be introduced (Montgomery, 2019). Processes must therefore be implemented to reduce the likelihood of introducing errors to the data and to mitigate their effects when they do.

Piloting

Piloting was carried out to make sure that there was coherence and effectiveness of the research tools before the real study was carried out (Boparai, Singh, & Kathuria, 2018). According to Jain, Dubey, & Jain, (2016), piloting was done for the purpose of finding out whether the type of data collected would be analysed purposefully in alliance to the expressed objectives and questions. Piloting for this study was done to ensure that the research tools were precise and simple enough to be understood by the participants. Piloting for this study was carried out in School A in Kinoni Sub-County, Kiruhura District western Uganda. The school was selected because it was not

included in study. By doing piloting, the researcher was able to revise, redesign and leave out any confusing questions.

Validity

Validity, according to Singh (2017), is the degree of assessment of a sequence of actions that confers exactness, reputability, and credibility. Conversely, validity is defined by Sürücü & Maslakci (2020) as the precision and expressiveness of conclusions drawn from the study's findings. On the other hand, validity refers to how well data analysis results represent the phenomenon being studied. As per Yudie, Anwar, & Rukun (2017), the validity of a test is determined by how well it measures the intended construct.

Reliability

Reliability, according to Price, Jhangiani, and Chiang (2015), is a gauge of how well a research instrument produces consistent outcomes. In measurement, it alludes to the random mistake proposed by (Ives, 2022). According to Sharma (2016), a measurement tool's reliability indicates how accurate it is. To determine whether the instrument consistently measures the things it was intended to measure, the researcher conducted a pilot study. The type of data being used determines which dependability type to utilize (Gadermann, Guhn, & Zumbo, 2019). Because the questions in this study were on an interval/ratio scale, reliability was evaluated using internal consistency. Since Cronbach's Alpha measures test

reliability by comparing an item's proximity to a collection of questions, it was utilized.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of methodically characterizing, summarizing, and analyzing collected data using statistical and logical techniques (Montgomery, 2019). This held for data that was quantitative. According to Montgomery (2019), to achieve the required levels of quality, accuracy, and completeness, data must be collected, assembled, sorted, edited, and coded. Once the data is loaded into the computer, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is used for analysis (Abu-Bader, 2021). The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was employed to evaluate the association between the role of guidance and counseling in the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district western Uganda.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher respected respondents' rights while being truthful (Hancock, Naaman, & Levy, 2020). Obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, respecting individual rights to privacy, and being truthful when sharing data was

necessary for this. Informed permission was conditioned on each respondent's voluntary, knowledgeable, and intelligent participation in the study. As a result, after explaining the goal of the study to the respondents, the researcher gave them freedom to assent or not by having them fill out a consent form (Hancock et al, 2020). Anonymity was preserved by hiding the respondents' identities and keeping them unrelated to their responses. The researcher took all reasonable precautions to reduce any dangers related to the exercise (Lim et al, 2021). The researcher took the necessary actions to mitigate any risks that may arise. Confidentiality was ensured by letting the respondents give and withhold as much information as they chose from the researcher (Wendler, 2020). The researcher maintained integrity by ensuring that data presentation, analysis, and interpretation were solely based on the data collected.

Results

Leaners' questionnaire response rate

Out of 342 questionnaires sent out, 312 were returned, which represented a response rate of 90 %. Thirty or 10 % were not returned

TABLE 2 .QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE RATE

No. of questionnaires	Leaners'		Teachers'	
	Tally	Percentage	Tally	Percentage
Returned	287	89	19	90
Not Returned	34	11	2	10
Total	321	100	21	100

Source: Primary Data

Three hundred and twenty-one questionnaires were sent out to learners out of which 287 were returned and 34 not returned. The questionnaires returned constituted 89 % of the total questionnaires sent out. For the case of teachers, 21 questionnaires were sent out and 19 questionnaires were returned 2 were not returned, which represented 90% and 10 % respectively. This high response rate was attributed to the researcher personally delivering questionnaires to the learners and

teachers and picking them up once they had been completed.

Descriptive Statistics

This section captured the mean and standard deviation of the variables and the responses by respondents on each of the variables (consistent timely attendance, consistent academic performance, effective study session, and student’s academic performance)

Academic Achievement and Discipline of Learners

TABLE 3. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND DISCIPLINE OF LEARNERS

Questionnaire Item	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Std. D
1. Learners regularly complete all their homework assignments on time.	58	48	160	40	2.5948	1.848
2. Learners actively participate in class discussions and activities.	20	56	170	60	2.882	0.001
3. Learners have a regular study schedule that they follow.	16	50	190	50	2.895	0.503
4. Learners often review their notes and materials before tests and exams.	6	20	150	130	3.320	1.308
5. Learners feel confident in their ability to understand the material presented in their classes.	47	80	100	79	2.690	1.392

Source: Primary Data 2024

The results in Table 11 indicate that 58 (19 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed that learners regularly completed all their

homework assignments on time. On the other hand, 48 (16%) of the respondents disagreed that Learners regularly complete

all their homework assignments on time, 160 (52 %) agreed that learners regularly completed all their homework assignments on time, and another 40 (13 %) strongly agreed that learners regularly completed all their homework assignments on time. Overall, 200 (65 %) of the respondents in one way or the other agreed that learners regularly completed all their homework assignments on time. The mean of all the responses on this item was mean of 2.5948 with a standard deviation of 1.848. This means that respondents were nearly even between disagreeing and agreeing.

Regarding the responses on item 2; 20 (7 %), 56 (18 %), 170 (55 %), and 60 (20 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed that learners actively participated in class discussions and activities. Overall, 230 (75 %) of the respondents agreed that learners actively participated in class discussions and activities. The mean of all their responses was 2.882, meaning that the respondents tended to agree that learners actively participated in class discussions and

activities. On item, 3, the responses were as follows: 16 (5 %), 50 (16 %), 190 (62 %), and 50 (17 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed, respectively that learners actively participated in class discussions and activities. Overall, 240 (78 %) agreed in some way that learners actively participated in class discussions and activities. All the responses on this item had a mean of 2.895 and a standard deviation of .503.

RESPONSES ON THE DISCIPLINE OF LEARNERS

Table 15 shows responses to the aspects of the discipline of learners. The results, as depicted in Table 15, indicate 42 (14 %), 170 (56 %), 85 (28 %), and 9 (2 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed that learners completed their assignments and homework on time. Overall, 255 (90 %) of the respondents agreed in one way or another that learners completed their assignments and homework on time. The mean of the responses was 2.199, and the standard deviation of 0.134.

TABLE 4. RESPONSES ON THE DISCIPLINE OF LEARNERS

Questionnaire Item	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. Learners complete their assignments and homework on time.	42	170	85	9	2.199	0.134
2. Learners stay focused during class and avoid distractions.	51	180	64	11	2.114	0.203

3. Leaners follow the school rules and regulations.	35	190	77	4	2.163	0.390
4. Leaners show respect towards their teachers and school staff.	14	187	80	25	2.379	0.024
Leaners handle conflicts with their classmates in a peaceful manner	12	179	96	19	2.397	0.212
5. Leaners seek help from teachers or counsellor's when they have a disagreement with a peer.	17	148	110	31	2.507	0.517

Source: Primary Data 2024

With respect to whether leaners took responsibility for their actions and admit when they are wrong; 35 (11 %), 150 (49 %), 90 (29 %), and 31 (11 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed respectively that leaners took responsibility for their actions and admitted when they were wrong. Overall, 185 (60 %) of the respondents disagreed in one way or another that leaners took responsibility for their actions and admitted when they were wrong. About whether leaners took care of school property and treated it with respect; 30 (10 %), 171 (56 %), 95 (31 %), 10 (3 %), strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed that leaners took care of school property and treated it with respect. Overall, 201 (66 %) of the respondents agreed in one way or another that learners took care of school property and treated it with respect.

Concerning the question respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions on whether the school's discipline policies were fair and consistently applied; 40 (13 %), 89

(29 %), 145 (47 %), and 32 (11 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed respectively that leaners took responsibility for their actions and admitted when they were wrong. Overall, 177 (58 %) of the respondents agreed in one way or another that the school's discipline policies were fair and consistently applied, while 129 (42 %) disagreed. To whether the disciplinary measures taken by the school helped to improve student behavior; 13 (4 %), 100 (33 %), 170 (56 %), 23 (7 %), strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed that the disciplinary measures taken by the school helped to improve student behavior. Overall, 193 (63 %) of the respondents agreed in one way or another that the disciplinary measures taken by the school helped to improve student behavior, while 113 (37 %) disagreed.

Pearson Correlation

Data from the questionnaire were analyzed by correlating independent variables (Academic Achievement, Career

Development, Life Skills, and Parents and Community involvement) with the dependent variable (Discipline of Learners), one at a time.

Justification for using correlation: it explored the association between variables, like the relationship between teacher-counsellor collaboration and learner discipline, and was a quantitative data analysis technique allowing for the analysis of large datasets and identification of patterns and trends.

Academic Achievement and Discipline of learners

To assess academic performance and its connection with the discipline of learners in public schools in Kiruhura District, Uganda, the following research question, “What is

the relationship between academic achievement and the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district, Western Uganda?”, was to be answered. To answer the question, the variable (Academic Achievement) had fourteen items used to measure it. The mean of the fourteen items was determined and used to create the variable academic achievement. Academic achievement and the discipline of learners were correlated using Pearson r to test the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis tested was, “There is no significant relationship between academic achievement and the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district, Western Uganda”. The results obtained are presented in Table 16.

TABLE 5: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND DISCIPLINE OF LEARNERS

Variable	Correlation	Academic Achievement	Discipline of Learners
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	1	.21**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.043
	N	306	306
Discipline of Learners	Pearson Correlation	.21**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	
	N	306	306

Source: Primary Data 2024

The results in Table 16 indicate that a Pearson r correlation coefficient is .21, which implies that the relationship is significant at an alpha level of 0.05. There was a weak positive relationship between the variables ($r(304) = .21, p = .043$). This p-value is less than 0.05; thus, the null hypothesis, “There is no significant relationship between academic achievement and the discipline of

learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district, Western Uganda,” was rejected.

Discussion

The findings showed a weak positive correlation of $r = .21$ between academic achievement and discipline, implying that

there is a significant but modest relationship between the two variables.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were proposed based on the study findings

1. Since academic achievement is significantly related to the discipline of learners, the Ministry of Education and

Sports should come up with a curriculum that meets the needs of all learners.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings, it has been suggested that there is a need to investigate the impact of specific counselling techniques on learner discipline.

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