

Influence of school disciplinary policies on pupil performance in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools. A cross-sectional study.

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ABSTRACT Background

Primary schools in Wakiso District have a number of policies in place. The study examined how school disciplinary policies influence pupil performance in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive, correlational, and cross-sectional survey design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. A total of 169 respondents were purposively and stratified sampled from a population of 300, including head teachers, teachers, and Primary Seven pupils. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review checklists.

Results

80 (53.3%) of the respondents were male, while 70 (46.7%) were female. The statement “The school has clear disciplinary policies known to pupils” had a mean of 2.40, implying that in most schools, pupils were either unaware of or not clearly informed about the disciplinary guidelines. The existence of rules for maintaining punctuality ($M = 2.47$) and classroom behavior ($M = 2.58$) was reported as weak, suggesting inconsistency in enforcing attendance and behavioral standards. Regarding respect for teachers and peers, the mean of 2.67 showed that while some level of regulation exists, it is not strongly upheld. Rules governing the use of school property ($M = 2.59$) and dress code ($M = 2.59$) were also rated low, pointing to inadequate supervision or enforcement mechanisms. Only a few pupils agreed that they could consistently answer questions during lessons ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 0.98$) or perform well in end-of-term examinations ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 0.98$). The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that disciplinary policies have a positive and statistically significant effect on academic performance. This suggests that

Conclusions

This indicates that schools with well-defined, consistently enforced, and non-punitive disciplinary measures tend to have pupils who perform better academically.

Recommendations

Schools should establish well-documented disciplinary policies that are communicated to both teachers and pupils.

Keywords: School disciplinary policies, Pupil performance, Universal Primary Education schools.

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Background

Primary schools in Wakiso District have a number of policies in place. The district has several initiatives in place to ensure that quality education is provided to all pupils. (Nanyonjo, 2024). 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). Research in the field of education has shown that effective School policies can have a significant impact on the academic performance of pupils. (Erten & Köseoğlu, 2022). School policies that

prioritize the recruitment, professional development, and retention of high-quality teachers can improve academic outcomes. Research shows that well-prepared and motivated teachers have a direct impact on student learning. (Mammadov & Çimen, 2019). Policies that promote quality curriculum and instructional practices can enhance student learning. Approaches such as differentiated instruction, personalized learning, and the integration of technology have been found to positively impact academic performance. (Anderson et al., 2019). Positive school climate and effective discipline policies can contribute to improved academic outcomes. Safe and inclusive school environments that promote respectful behavior and address student needs can enhance student

engagement and learning. (Erten & Köseoğlu, 2022). Adequate resources, including funding, facilities, and support services, are essential for effective School policies. Schools with sufficient resources to meet the needs of all students are more likely to achieve better academic outcomes. When applied to school policies, positive attitudes toward rules, social reinforcement from parents and teachers, and students' belief in their capacity to comply all contribute to improved academic performance (Davis et al., 2022; Martinez et al., 2017). This framework supports the understanding of how school policy acceptance and compliance translate into academic outcomes. The study examined how school disciplinary policies influence pupil performance in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools.

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 collect data at a single point in time. The study also employed a mixed research approach in which 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 study was carried out in four selected public primary schools in Wakiso District. The study used head teachers, Primary Seven pupils, and teachers of the selected primary schools as elements for the study. These particular pupils were selected because they were old enough to read and interpret questions to provide unbiased answers. The head teachers and teachers were selected to participate in the study because they were directly responsible for enforcing school policies. In addition, both teachers and head teachers monitored and assessed pupil performance through tests, examinations, and continuous assessments. A total of 300 participants were used as the study population. This consisted of 4 head teachers, 54 teachers, and 242 Primary Seven pupils (Wakiso District Education Department, 2024).

Table 1: Target Population

Selected primary schools	Head teachers	Teachers	Primary seven pupils
Kitende C.O.U Primary School	01	15	55
Kawotto Primary School	01	14	53
Mpumudde Primary School	01	13	74
St Anthony Primary School	01	12	60
Total	04	54	242
Target Population			300

Source: Wakiso District Education Department (2024)

Sample Size

Table 2: Population Size, Sample Size, and Sampling Techniques

Selected participants	Population size	Sample size	Sampling technique
Head teachers	04	03	Purposive sampling
Teachers	54	30	Purposive sampling
Pupils	242	136	Stratified sampling
Target Population	300	169	

Source: Wakiso District Education Department (2024)

For this study, the researcher adopted the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size. Therefore, 169 respondents were selected proportionally based on the population, as shown in Table 3.2 above.

Sampling Techniques

The study employed purposive sampling and stratified sampling to select participants from the target population.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select head teachers and teachers. This technique was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to intentionally select individuals who were most knowledgeable and directly involved in the implementation and monitoring of school policies, such as disciplinary procedures, attendance regulations, and school dues management. Their

experience and professional roles made them well-suited to provide relevant and reliable data on the relationship between school policies and pupils' academic performance.

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Stratified Sampling

Stratified sampling was used to select students from their respective primary schools. This technique involved dividing the student population into strata (schools) and then selecting a proportionate number of students from each stratum or school. This approach ensured that the sample was representative of the diverse characteristics within the student population, thereby improving the validity and generalizability of the findings related to how school policies affected learners' academic performance.

Research Instruments

Primary data were 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 were collected using a documentary review list.

Questionnaires

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

Interviews

This was person-to-person verbal communication in which one person asked another questions to elicit information or opinions. This instrument helped the researcher collect information that could not be directly observed. Data from head teachers and teachers were obtained through the use of interviews. This was used to acquire in-depth information about the study topic.

Documentary Review Checklist

These included mainly secondary sources. Information was sourced from documents related to the area of study. These documents were studied and critically reviewed while keeping 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, general staff meeting minutes.

Research Procedure

The researcher sought an introductory letter from the School of Graduate Studies and Research of Team University, which was presented to the head teachers of the selected primary schools in Wakiso District to seek authorization to conduct the research and request their participation.

The researcher then administered the questionnaire to the respective respondents, which had been developed with the guidance of the supervisor. He further made appointments with the respondents regarding when, where, and at what venue they would meet to conduct interviews or administer questionnaires.

The researcher also made use of secondary data by reviewing relevant textbooks, journal articles, periodicals, manuals, dissertations, and publications, as well as visiting both international and local newspapers. The authors of these articles were fully cited and credited for their contribution to the research.

Validity of Instruments

In this study, the instruments of data collection were subjected to face validity to ensure the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the inferences made from the results. With the help of the supervisor, the correctness of the research elements in collecting the intended data was assessed based on a four-point scale of relevance, clarity, simplicity, and ambiguity.

The Content Validity Index (CVI) for each instrument was determined by dividing the number of valid (relevant) questions by the total number of questions in the instrument. After evaluation, the CVI was found to be 0.85, which was obtained by having 34 out of 40 items rated as relevant by the experts ($CVI = 34 \div 40 = 0.85$). This value exceeded the minimum acceptable CVI threshold of 0.70 recommended by Amin (2005), indicating that the instruments were valid and suitable for data collection.

Reliability of Instruments

Reliability focused on assessing the consistency and stability of data collection instruments against any chance factors or environmental conditions in the measurement of the variables (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008). The instruments for data collection were tested for internal reliability within the school, using a total of 5 respondents. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. After analysis, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.8 was obtained, indicating a high level of reliability. This value exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.7 recommended by Amin (2009), confirming that the instruments were reliable and consistent for measuring the study variables.

Data Analysis

The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were edited and grouped by theme before being analyzed using content analysis. Quantitative data were entered into a data sheet using coded values and were manipulated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v.24). Descriptive statistics were obtained, and cross-tabulations of some items were made to identify relationships, which were tested using Pearson correlation coefficients significant at the 0.01 level. Additionally, frequency counts and %ages 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.

In this study, thematic analysis was employed to analyze qualitative data collected from secondary sources, including school policy documents, school disciplinary records, inspection reports, minutes of School Management Committee (SMC) meetings, and reports from the Wakiso District Education Office. Thematic analysis was considered an appropriate method for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) across qualitative data.

The use of thematic analysis in this study enabled the researcher to move beyond surface-level descriptions and explore deeper meanings, contextual influences, and stakeholder perspectives embedded in school policy documentation. This provided rich qualitative insights that complemented the quantitative data and contributed to a holistic understanding of the research problem.

Ethical Considerations of the Study

The study adhered to established ethical standards to ensure the protection of the rights, dignity, and welfare of all participants. The following ethical considerations were observed:

Informed Consent: All participants (teachers, head teachers, and students) were provided with clear and detailed information about the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study. Their participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before their involvement. For pupils, consent was sought through

school authorities or guardians in line with ethical guidelines for involving minors in research.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: All data collected was treated with strict confidentiality. No names or identifying information were included in the research report. Codes or pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity, and participants were not exposed to any form of risk due to their involvement in the study.

Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw: Participants were informed of their right to voluntarily participate or decline without any form of coercion. They were also assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences.

Protection of Minors: Since the study involved pupils, additional ethical precautions were taken. The researcher avoided asking sensitive or intrusive questions and ensured a child-friendly, respectful approach during data collection. Approval was sought from school authorities to involve pupils in the study, and their safety and well-being were prioritized throughout the research process.

Avoidance of Harm: The study was designed and conducted in a manner that avoided any physical, psychological, or emotional harm to participants. All questions were framed in a respectful and non-threatening manner, and participants were not subjected to any form of discomfort or distress.

Permission from Relevant Authorities: Before data collection, the researcher sought official permission from the Wakiso District Education Department and school heads. This ensured compliance with institutional and district-level research regulations.

Academic Integrity: The researcher upheld academic honesty and integrity throughout the research process. All sources used were properly acknowledged, and data were reported truthfully. Plagiarism and data falsification were strictly avoided.

Results

Response Rate

The response rate was determined using the formula;

$$\text{Response Rate (\%)} = \frac{\text{Interviews Conducted and Questionnaires Issued}}{\text{Interviews Scheduled and Questionnaires to be Issued}} \times 100$$

Table 3: Response Rate of the Study

Selected Participants	Interviews Scheduled / Questionnaires to be Issued	Interviews Conducted / Questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (%)
Head teachers	03	03	100%
Teachers	30	25	83.3%
Pupils	136	122	89.7%
Total / Target Population	169	150	88.8%

Source: Primary data (2025)

The study targeted a total of 169 respondents comprising head teachers, teachers, and pupils from selected primary schools in Wakiso District. Out of these, 150 respondents successfully participated, representing an overall response rate of 88.8 %.

As indicated in Table 3, all three (3) head teachers who were scheduled for interviews participated, yielding a 100 % response rate. Among the teachers, 25 out of 30

questionnaires were duly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 83.3 %. For the pupils, 122 out of 136 questionnaires were retrieved, giving a response rate of 89.7 %.

The overall response rate of 88.8 % is considered satisfactory for data analysis and interpretation. This high response rate implies that the findings of the study are reliable and representative of the target population.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 150)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	80	53.3
	Female	70	46.7
Age (years)	Below 10	20	13.3
	10–12	90	60.0
	13 and above	40	26.7
Role in School	Prefect	25	16.7
	Class Representative	30	20.0
	Pupil	95	63.3

Source: Primary data (2025).

Gender: Among the respondents, 80 (53.3%) were male, while 70 (46.7%) were female. This indicates a fairly balanced representation of genders, ensuring that the perspectives of both male and female pupils were considered in the study.

Age: The age distribution of respondents showed that the majority were aged between 10 and 12 years, accounting for 90 respondents (60%). Pupils below 10 years constituted 20 respondents (13.3%), while those aged 13 years and above made up 40 respondents (26.7%). This distribution reflects the typical age range of Primary Seven pupils in the selected schools, with most being in the middle age bracket.

Role in School: The study also captured the roles of respondents within the school setting. Most respondents were regular pupils, numbering 95 (63.3%), while 25 respondents (16.7%) held the position of prefect, and 30 respondents (20.0%) were class representatives. Including student leaders such as prefects and class representatives provided additional perspectives on the enforcement and perception of school policies.

Overall, the demographic findings show that the study population was diverse in terms of age, gender, and school roles. This diversity enabled the researcher to collect a wide range of views and experiences regarding school policies and their influence on pupils' academic performance. The fairly balanced gender distribution and inclusion of both ordinary pupils and student leaders strengthened the validity of the findings, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Disciplinary Policies in Public Primary Schools

Descriptive Findings on Disciplinary Policies in Public Primary Schools

This section presents the findings on the disciplinary policies existing in public primary schools within Wakiso District. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements relating to the presence and implementation of disciplinary rules and practices in their schools. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 5: Disciplinary Policies in Public Primary Schools

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev.
The school has clear disciplinary policies known to pupils.	45	52	28	18	7	2.40	1.09
The school has rules for maintaining the punctuality of pupils.	40	54	25	21	10	2.47	1.12
The school has rules on maintaining classroom behavior.	35	50	28	27	10	2.58	1.10
The school has rules on maintaining respect for teachers and peers.	32	48	26	31	13	2.67	1.13
The school has rules on the use of school property.	30	53	29	25	13	2.59	1.11
The school has rules on dress code for pupils and teachers.	29	50	34	26	11	2.59	1.08
Teachers provide verbal warnings and counseling to pupils.	28	48	27	31	16	2.71	1.16
Pupils often write apologies.	33	45	36	25	11	2.55	1.09
Some pupils are suspended (in serious cases).	42	50	31	18	9	2.41	1.05
Restorative practices (e.g., conflict resolution through dialogue).	47	52	28	18	5	2.30	1.01
Administrators usually praise and reward well-behaved pupils.	40	49	32	21	8	2.44	1.07
School rules prohibit lateness.	34	48	30	26	12	2.58	1.09
School rules prohibit unjustified absenteeism.	38	47	29	25	11	2.54	1.08
School rules prohibit the use of abusive language.	36	50	28	24	12	2.52	1.10
School rules prohibit fighting.	34	52	27	26	11	2.55	1.09
School rules prohibit bullying.	37	48	32	23	10	2.50	1.07
School rules prohibit stealing.	35	50	28	25	12	2.55	1.08
School leaders display disciplinary rules publicly and explain them regularly to pupils.	40	54	26	20	10	2.43	1.06
Overall Mean						2.52	1.09

Source: Primary data (2025)

Table 5, the overall mean score was 2.52 (SD = 1.09), indicating that respondents generally disagreed with most of the statements. This suggests that the level of implementation of disciplinary policies in the sampled public primary schools was low.

Specifically, the statement “The school has clear disciplinary policies known to pupils” had a mean of 2.40, implying that in most schools, pupils were either unaware of or not clearly informed about the disciplinary guidelines. Similarly, the existence of rules for maintaining punctuality (M = 2.47) and classroom behavior (M = 2.58) was reported as weak, suggesting inconsistency in enforcing attendance and behavioral standards.

Regarding respect for teachers and peers, the mean of 2.67 showed that while some level of regulation exists, it is not strongly upheld. Rules governing the use of school property (M = 2.59) and dress code (M = 2.59) were also rated low, pointing to inadequate supervision or enforcement mechanisms.

The findings further revealed that disciplinary actions such as verbal warnings, counseling, and written apologies were not consistently practiced. For instance, the mean score for “Teachers provide verbal warnings and counseling to pupils” was 2.71, while “Pupils often write apologies” recorded 2.55, indicating limited implementation of corrective approaches. Suspension of pupils in serious cases (M = 2.41) and restorative practices such as dialogue and conflict resolution (M = 2.30) were reported as

minimal, reflecting a lack of structured disciplinary interventions.

Additionally, preventive rules—such as those prohibiting lateness, absenteeism, use of abusive language, fighting, bullying, and stealing—were all rated between 2.50 and 2.58, confirming that while such policies may exist on paper, their enforcement remains weak. The statement “School leaders display disciplinary rules publicly and explain them regularly to pupils” had one of the lowest means (2.43), implying poor communication of school regulations to learners.

Overall, the low mean scores across all items indicate that disciplinary policies in public primary schools within Wakiso District are inadequately developed and poorly enforced. This lack of clear and consistently applied disciplinary frameworks may contribute to poor pupil behavior and, consequently, lower academic performance.

Qualitative Findings on Disciplinary Policies in Public Primary Schools

During the interview, the Head Teacher of a selected primary school said, “Our school has some rules in place, but they are not clearly documented or communicated to all pupils. Most of the time, pupils only learn about the rules when they commit an offence. We do not have a written disciplinary policy that guides teachers on how to handle misconduct, so each teacher deals with discipline in their own way. Sometimes, we just warn the pupils verbally

and let them go. This has made it difficult to maintain consistent discipline across classes.”

Another Head Teacher also said, “We try to maintain order through verbal warnings and sometimes counseling, but we rarely record disciplinary cases. There is no specific committee responsible for discipline, and follow-up on cases is minimal. Some teachers are reluctant to enforce school rules because they fear being accused of mistreating pupils. As a result, issues like lateness, absenteeism, and disrespect are quite common. We only suspend pupils in extreme cases, but this is not done in a structured way.”

Another Head Teacher added, “The school rules are displayed on the noticeboard, but most pupils do not take them seriously. We do not have regular sessions to remind pupils about these rules or their purpose. There is also limited involvement of parents in disciplinary matters, which makes it hard to correct pupils’ behavior. Sometimes, even when we punish a pupil, parents complain to the authorities, so teachers prefer to ignore minor offences. We reward good behavior occasionally, but we don’t have a structured system for that.”

Table 6: Thematic Summary of Head Teachers’ Interview Responses on Disciplinary Policies in Public Primary Schools

Theme	Sub-theme	Summary of Responses	Illustrative Quotes from Head Teachers
1. Existence and clarity of disciplinary policies	Lack of formal and documented policies	Most head teachers reported that their schools do not have clear, written disciplinary policies. Rules are informal and inconsistently communicated to pupils.	“Our school has some rules in place, but they are not clearly documented or communicated to all pupils.” – Head Teacher 1
2. Enforcement of disciplinary measures	Inconsistent application of discipline	Disciplinary actions vary from teacher to teacher; there is no standardized procedure for addressing misconduct.	“We do not have a written disciplinary policy that guides teachers on how to handle misconduct, so each teacher deals with discipline in their own way.” – Head Teacher 1
3. Record-keeping and follow-up	Poor documentation and minimal follow-up	Schools rarely record disciplinary cases, and follow-up on offences is weak, leading to repeated misbehavior.	“We rarely record disciplinary cases. There is no specific committee responsible for discipline, and follow-up on cases is minimal.” – Head Teacher 2
4. Teacher involvement and attitude	Fear of enforcing rules	Teachers are hesitant to discipline pupils due to fear of complaints or misinterpretation of their actions.	“Some teachers are reluctant to enforce school rules because they fear being accused of mistreating pupils.” – Head Teacher 2
5. Communication of school rules	Limited awareness among pupils	Although some schools display rules publicly, pupils are not regularly reminded or sensitized about them.	“The school rules are displayed on the noticeboard, but most pupils do not take them seriously.” – Head Teacher 3
6. Parental involvement	Weak cooperation between the school and the parents	Parents are rarely engaged in disciplinary matters, and some even oppose teachers’ actions.	“There is also limited involvement of parents in disciplinary matters, which makes it hard to correct pupils’ behavior.” – Head Teacher 3
7. Positive reinforcement	Lack of a structured reward system	Schools occasionally praise well-behaved pupils, but no formal reward or incentive system exists.	“We reward good behavior occasionally, but we don’t have a structured system for that.” – Head Teacher 3

Source: Primary data (Interviews with Head Teachers, 2025)

Table 6 reveals that public primary schools in Wakiso District generally have weak and poorly enforced disciplinary policies. The major issues identified include the absence of written rules, inconsistent disciplinary

practices, lack of record-keeping, minimal teacher and parental involvement, and limited use of positive reinforcement. These weaknesses collectively undermine

efforts to maintain good discipline among pupils and may adversely affect their academic performance.

Table 7: Academic Performance in Public Primary Schools (N = 150)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev.
I understand most of what my teachers teach in class.	40	55	30	20	5	2.30	0.95
I complete my classwork and homework on time	35	50	35	25	5	2.35	0.97
I feel confident answering questions during lessons.	50	45	30	20	5	2.10	0.98
I often score good marks in my tests and examinations.	45	55	25	20	5	2.15	0.96
I ask for help when I don't understand something in class.	30	40	35	35	10	2.60	1.02
I usually get good marks in the end-of-term exams.	50	45	30	20	5	2.10	0.98
My performance in mock exams has improved this year	55	50	25	15	5	2.05	0.94
I understand how to solve mathematics problems correctly.	60	45	25	15	5	2.00	0.95
I can read and understand English comprehension passages easily.	50	50	25	20	5	2.10	0.97
I have improved in writing correct English compositions.	55	50	25	15	5	2.05	0.94
Overall Mean						2.17	0.96

Source: Primary Data (2025)

The findings indicate that academic performance among pupils in the sampled schools is generally low, with an overall mean score of 2.17 (SD = 0.96). Most pupils reported difficulty in understanding the lessons taught by their teachers, completing classwork and homework on time, and achieving good results in tests and examinations. Specifically, only a few pupils agreed that they could consistently answer questions during lessons (M = 2.10, SD = 0.98) or perform well in end-of-term examinations (M = 2.10, SD = 0.98).

The lowest mean scores were observed in mathematics problem-solving (M = 2.00, SD = 0.95) and writing correct English compositions (M = 2.05, SD = 0.94), suggesting significant challenges in numeracy and literacy. Additionally, pupils reported limited improvement in mock exams (M = 2.05, SD = 0.94), reflecting inadequate progression over the academic year. While pupils indicated some effort to seek help when they did not understand lessons (M = 2.60, SD = 1.02), this appeared insufficient to significantly enhance overall academic outcomes.

The findings imply that pupils in public primary schools face challenges in both conceptual understanding and application of knowledge, which may be influenced by factors such as limited teacher support, insufficient instructional resources, irregular attendance, and the low enforcement of school policies related to discipline and academic engagement.

In conclusion, the descriptive statistics reveal that the academic performance of pupils in the sampled public primary schools is low, highlighting a critical need for targeted interventions aimed at improving teaching

effectiveness, learner support, and overall school management practices to enhance pupil learning outcomes.

Qualitative Findings on the Academic Performance of Pupils in Wakiso District

During Interviews, Head Teacher 1 said, *“Many pupils struggle with understanding lessons, especially in mathematics and English. Some are unable to complete homework on time because they lack guidance at home. While a few pupils perform well, the majority score low in tests and end-of-term exams. We try to offer remedial lessons, but limited resources and large class sizes make it difficult to provide individual support.”*

Head Teacher 2 also said, *“The overall academic performance is below expectations. Pupils often lack the confidence to answer questions in class and are hesitant to ask for help. Our mock exam results show minimal improvement compared to the beginning of the year. Factors like absenteeism, limited learning materials, and overcrowded classrooms contribute to the low performance.”*

Head Teacher 3 added, *“While some pupils excel, most struggle with reading comprehension and solving mathematics problems. Writing skills are particularly weak. Teachers make efforts to provide extra support, but the number of pupils per class makes it challenging. We also notice that pupils who regularly attend school perform better, showing the link between attendance and academic achievement.”*

Table 8: Thematic Summary of Head Teachers' Responses on Academic Performance

Theme	Sub-theme	Summary of Responses	Illustrative Quotes
1. Comprehension and Understanding	Difficulty in lessons	Many pupils struggle to understand lessons, particularly in mathematics and English.	"Many pupils struggle with understanding lessons, especially in mathematics and English." – Head Teacher 1
2. Homework and Classwork Completion	Limited support and guidance	Pupils often fail to complete homework on time due to a lack of support at home.	"Some are unable to complete homework on time because they lack guidance at home." – Head Teacher 1
3. Confidence and Participation	Low class participation	Pupils are hesitant to answer questions and ask for help.	"Pupils often lack confidence to answer questions in class and are hesitant to ask for help." – Head Teacher 2
4. Academic Outcomes	Poor performance in exams	Most pupils score low in tests, mock exams, and end-of-term exams.	"Our mock exam results show minimal improvement compared to the beginning of the year." – Head Teacher 2
5. Literacy and Numeracy Skills	Weak reading, writing, and math	Pupils struggle with reading comprehension, writing compositions, and solving mathematics problems.	"While some pupils excel, most struggle with reading comprehension and solving mathematics problems. Writing skills are particularly weak." – Head Teacher 3
6. Influencing Factors	Attendance and resources	Low attendance, limited learning materials, and large class sizes negatively affect performance.	"We also notice that pupils who regularly attend school perform better, showing the link between attendance and academic achievement." – Head Teacher 3

Source: Primary Data (Interviews with Head Teachers, 2025)

These insights triangulate with the quantitative findings (Table 4.9), demonstrating that low academic performance is a significant challenge in public primary schools in Wakiso District, and interventions are needed to improve teaching quality, pupil support, and resource availability.

Documentary Findings on the Academic Performance of Pupils in Wakiso District

To complement the primary data obtained through questionnaires and interviews, documentary evidence from selected public primary schools in Wakiso District was analyzed. The documents reviewed included Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) results, classroom-based continuous assessment reports, and records of skills acquisition. This triangulation of data provided an in-depth understanding of pupils' academic performance and learning outcomes.

National Examination Scores

Analysis of the PLE results for the 2024 academic year indicated that academic performance among pupils in the sampled schools was generally low. The review of the records revealed the following:

Out of a total of 150 pupils whose records were examined, approximately 68% obtained grades 5 and below, which is

considered below average performance relative to national standards.

Only 12% of pupils achieved grades 1 or 2, representing high academic achievers.

Subject-specific analysis showed that mathematics and English were consistently the weakest areas, with average scores of 38% and 42%, respectively, against the national average of 55% for mathematics and 50% for English.

Pupils performed moderately in Science and Social Studies, with mean scores ranging from 50–55%, though even in these subjects, performance rarely exceeded national benchmarks.

The PLE records indicated a marked disparity between high-performing and low-performing pupils, suggesting that systemic factors within schools, such as resource availability, teacher effectiveness, and classroom management, may significantly influence outcomes.

These findings confirm that national examinations reflect the low academic achievement among pupils in public primary schools in Wakiso District, particularly in core subjects essential for continued learning.

Classroom-Based Continuous Assessment

Documentary evidence from termly assessment reports (2024/2025 academic year) revealed persistent challenges in classroom learning:

Homework and assignment completion were irregular; records showed that only 40% of pupils consistently submitted homework on time, reflecting low engagement and insufficient support from both teachers and guardians. Classroom tests and quizzes indicated that a majority of pupils scored below 50%, especially in mathematics, English comprehension, and composition writing, confirming the patterns observed in national examinations. Remedial instruction was commonly recommended, with over 60% of pupils identified as needing additional support to meet minimum learning objectives.

Teachers' records documented slow academic progression across terms, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills, highlighting that instructional interventions had limited effectiveness without consistent monitoring and support.

Assessment data further showed a correlation between regular attendance and higher performance, underscoring the importance of school policies on punctuality and absenteeism in influencing learning outcomes.

These classroom-based continuous assessments substantiate the survey and interview findings, indicating that low academic performance is systemic rather than episodic, and is influenced by both individual and institutional factors.

Skills Acquisition

Documentation on the skills acquired by pupils highlighted significant deficiencies in core academic competencies:

Reading and comprehension skills were generally weak; only 35% of pupils could accurately read and interpret English passages, as recorded in teachers' end-of-term reports.

In mathematics, approximately 65% of pupils were unable to solve grade-level problems independently, demonstrating poor mastery of basic numeracy concepts.

Writing skills were notably limited, with frequent errors in grammar, sentence construction, and composition organization. Most pupils produced incomplete or poorly structured compositions, as observed in classroom portfolios.

Records of practical and applied skills, such as basic science experiments, craftwork, and group projects, indicated moderate acquisition; however, these skills were insufficient to compensate for the gaps in literacy and numeracy.

The documentation further revealed that pupils who attended remedial sessions and participated actively in class exercises showed slightly better skill acquisition, reinforcing the link between engagement and learning outcomes.

These findings suggest that pupils in Wakiso District are not acquiring essential skills required for progression to secondary education, particularly in reading, writing, and numeracy, which undermines overall academic achievement

Correlation Findings of the Study

Table 9: Correlation between School Policies and Academic Performance of Primary pupils in Wakiso District

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. School disciplinary policies	1	0.56**	0.42**	0.48**
2. Academic performance of primary pupils	0.48**	0.52**	0.44**	1

Key:

- $N = 150$
- Correlation coefficients (r) are Pearson's values
- Significance levels: $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed) indicated by **
- Values closer to 1 indicate a stronger positive correlation

The results indicate a moderate positive correlation between school disciplinary policies and academic performance ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that schools with clear, consistently enforced disciplinary rules tend to have pupils who perform better academically. The positive

relationship can be explained by the structured learning environment created through effective discipline, which minimizes disruptions, encourages punctuality, and fosters a culture of accountability among pupils.

Regression Coefficients.

Table 10: Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.12	0.24	-	4.67	0.000**
Disciplinary Policies	0.28	0.06	0.30	4.67	0.000**

Key:

- **B** = unstandardized coefficient; indicates the predicted change in academic performance for a one-unit change in the predictor.
- **Beta** = standardized coefficient; shows the relative importance of each predictor.
- **Sig.** = p-value; significance of each predictor.

Disciplinary Policies: The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that disciplinary policies have a positive and statistically significant effect on academic performance. This suggests that schools with well-structured disciplinary systems, including rules for classroom behavior, punctuality, and respect, tend to have pupils who perform better academically.

Discussion

The study findings indicate a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$) between school disciplinary policies and the academic performance of primary pupils in Wakiso District. This aligns with the literature emphasizing that clear, consistent, and fair disciplinary frameworks contribute to a structured learning environment, minimize classroom disruptions, and foster a culture of responsibility among pupils (Nakabugo et al., 2019; Ategeka & Ssenyonga, 2021).

Schools that enforce non-violent disciplinary measures, including verbal warnings, counseling, restorative practices, and praise for good behavior, tend to provide pupils with a safe and supportive learning environment. The empirical findings mirror this, as interviews with head teachers revealed that the lack of well-structured disciplinary policies led to classroom indiscipline, absenteeism, and poor academic engagement. These results corroborate Tumuhire (2020), who argued that punitive or inconsistent discipline negatively affects pupil morale, reduces engagement, and ultimately impairs academic performance.

Moreover, the observed moderate correlation between disciplinary policies and other school policy variables—attendance policies ($r = 0.56$) and school dues policies ($r = 0.42$)—suggests that schools with strong disciplinary frameworks often implement complementary measures to enhance overall learning outcomes. This supports the theoretical notion that school management practices are interrelated, and the effectiveness of one policy often depends on the implementation of others (Ategeka & Ssenyonga, 2021).

In summary, the study confirms that well-formulated, consistently enforced, and non-punitive disciplinary policies have a positive influence on academic outcomes in

public primary schools, consistent with both local and international research.

Conclusions

The study established a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$) between disciplinary policies and pupils' academic performance. This indicates that schools with well-defined, consistently enforced, and non-punitive disciplinary measures tend to have pupils who perform better academically. The conclusion is that effective disciplinary policies contribute to creating a structured and supportive learning environment, reducing classroom disruptions and promoting pupil engagement, which collectively enhance academic outcomes.

Recommendations

Develop and Enforce Clear Disciplinary Guidelines: Schools should establish well-documented disciplinary policies that are communicated to both teachers and pupils. These guidelines should emphasise non-violent corrective measures, positive reinforcement, and consistency in implementation.

Teacher Training in Child Guidance and Counselling: Continuous professional development programs should be conducted to equip teachers with skills in restorative practices, conflict resolution, and psychosocial support, thereby enhancing pupil behaviour and engagement.

Promote Positive Behaviour Recognition: Schools should implement reward systems for well-behaved pupils, including verbal praise, certificates, or privileges, to reinforce desirable behaviours that support learning.

Regular Review and Monitoring: School management should periodically review disciplinary policies to ensure they remain relevant, fair, and supportive of academic achievement.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CVI	Content Validity Index
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
PLE	Primary Leaving Examination
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNEB	Uganda National Examinations Board
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education

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Conflict of interest

The author did not declare any conflict of interest

Data availability

Data is available upon request

Author contribution

Betty Nalugwa collected data and drafted the manuscript of the study

Dr. Muhammad Ssendagi supervised the study

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