

The influence of parents' level of education on pupils' academic performance in primary schools of Busamizi Subcounty, Buvuma district. A Cross-sectional study.

James Higenyi Nesomi, Dr Fawz Mulumba, Dr. Muhammad Ssendagi*
School of Graduate Studies and Research of Team University

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Abstract

Background.

Parental education has long been recognized as a key predictor of children's learning outcomes, shaping academic support, expectations, and educational opportunities at home. This study examined the influence of parents' education levels on pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Buvuma District.

Methodology.

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was employed, involving pupils selected through stratified and simple random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and linear regression, while qualitative responses were thematically analyzed.

Results.

The majority of participants were girls (57%), aged 11–14 years (80.8%), and had spent between 1 and 10 years in school. Parental involvement practices such as checking homework ($M=1.70$, $SD=1.042$), assisting with assignments ($M=2.43$, $SD=1.355$), reading school letters ($M=2.01$, $SD=1.131$), and providing study time ($M=1.97$, $SD=1.050$) positively influenced pupils' academic performance. Pearson's correlation indicated a significant positive relationship between parents' education level and academic performance ($r = .586$, $p < .001$). Regression results further showed that parental education explained 33.3% of the variance in pupils' academic performance (Adjusted $R^2 = .333$).

Conclusion

Parental level of education was statistically significant towards pupils' academic performance in Buvuma district. The educational attainment of their children in both rural and national samples was easily influenced by their conducive home study environment.

Recommendation.

Different stakeholders, such as government (policy makers) and the school administrators, the parents, and opinion leaders, should be considered so that good academic performance of pupils in Buvuma district is attained.

Keywords: Parental Education, Academic Performance, Primary Schools, Buvuma District, Pupils' Achievement

Submitted: September 30, 2025

Accepted: October 20, 2025

Published: October 30, 2025

Corresponding Author: Dr. Muhammad Ssendagi

Email: sendagimoh@gmail.com

School of Graduate Studies and Research of Team University.

Background.

Educational attainment among children continues to draw scholarly attention due to its strong association with parental characteristics, particularly parental education levels. Empirical evidence demonstrates that children whose parents possess higher educational qualifications often exhibit stronger academic aspirations, improved performance, and long-term educational plans compared to those whose parents have limited schooling (Sarigiani, 1990). Educated parents are more likely to provide academic support at home, including supervision of homework, guidance, access to learning materials, and participation in enrichment activities such as tutoring, museum visits, and library use, that stimulate cognitive

development and academic success (Eccles, 2005). As a result, parental education forms an important foundation for shaping children's motivation, learning experiences, and academic outcomes.

Parental expectations also play a critical role in shaping students' educational behavior. Parents with higher levels of education often hold greater confidence in their children's academic abilities and expect them to excel, behave well, and pursue higher education, which in turn encourages students to work harder and perform better in school (Mallan, 2009). This confidence can strengthen a child's self-concept, an essential predictor of academic success. However, excessive expectations may cause stress and negatively affect performance, suggesting that the

influence of parental education is not always uniformly positive. Studies across different contexts consistently show a significant positive relationship between parents' education levels and students' academic performance, reinforcing the importance of parental literacy and educational engagement (Rana, 2015; Zehri & Abdelbaki, 2013).

Despite this consensus, the relationship remains complex. Some research indicates that even parents with little or no education may prioritize schooling and work hard to ensure that their children attain better educational opportunities than they did (Akujieze, 2003). Nonetheless, children from well-educated families are more likely to benefit from stable socioeconomic conditions, academic resources, a conducive home learning environment, and parental guidance, which collectively support higher achievement (Rothstein, 2004). Existing studies, however, have not fully explored how other socioeconomic factors, such as parental occupation or income, interact with educational level to influence academic outcomes, leaving gaps that warrant further investigation (Jamila, 2009). Understanding these dynamics is essential, as education equips individuals with knowledge, values, skills, and competencies needed for success in modern society (Musarat et al., 2013). Therefore, examining the role of parental education remains critical

for informing policies and interventions aimed at improving student performance.

Methodology. Research Design.

The study adopted a cross-sectional approach and used a mixed-method research approach (quantitative and qualitative approaches). The specific design used under mixed methods is a descriptive research design.

Study population.

The study population is the entire group of individuals or objects to which a researcher is interested in generating the conclusions of a research (Best and Khan, 1996). Buvuma District comprises privately-owned and government-aided primary schools. But for this study, only government-aided primary schools were considered. The target population for this study included pupils, teachers, parents, head teachers, and the Area Education Officer, Buvuma District. has eight Government-Aided Primary Schools, and these are: The study targeted 8 head teachers, 120 teachers, 3375 pupils, 1 Area Education Officer, and 144 parents. Government-aided primary schools were selected because they have large classes with students from diverse socioeconomic family backgrounds.

Table 1: Target population

School	Pupils	Teachers	Head teachers	Parents	Area Education Officer
A	456	22	1	18	1
B	425	14	1	18	
C	389	11	1	18	
D	630	24	1	18	
E	285	15	1	18	
F	360	14	1	18	
G	340	8	1	18	
H	490	12	1	18	
Total	3375	120	8	144	01

Variations in the numbers of teachers and pupils were a result of pre-visit findings in schools.

Sample size and sampling procedure

Teachers were included in this study because they are directly involved in monitoring pupils' school attendance, assessment, and evaluation of pupils, and are close to pupils as far as the teaching and learning process is concerned. Pupils were involved because they are direct

beneficiaries of parents' socio-economic status, thus they are rich informants. Head teachers were involved because they are direct administrators involved in the supervision and monitoring of all activities in the school. Parents were included in this study to understand the different socioeconomic activities they are undertaking. In addition, the Area Education Officer was part of the study, being the custodian of policies and records that affect the teaching and learning process in primary schools.

Table 2: Sample Size.

Category respondents	Population (N)	study	Sample size(n)	%age	Sampling technique
Head teachers	08		08	2	Purposive
Teachers	120		12	4	Simple random
Pupils	3375		333	90	Simple random
AEO	1		1	1.0	Purposive
Parents	144		14	3	Simple random
Total	3648		368	100	

n 3648

$$\frac{1 + 3648(0.05)^2}{1 + 3648(0.05)^2} \quad n = 368 \text{ respondents}$$

In this study, 333 pupils, 12 teachers, 8 head teachers, 14 parents, and 1 AEO were engaged. This sample was sufficient because Mugenda and Mugenda (2008) agreed that a sample size between 10% and 30% of the total population is statistically significant for social studies. This sample size was reached using Slovin's formula. It is computed as $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$ where n = Number of samples, N = Total population, and e = Error tolerance (level). A simple random sampling technique was used to select teachers, pupils, and parents because it allowed an equal chance of the population to be selected without bias, and it was easy to use (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In addition, the purposive sampling technique was used to select head teachers and Area Education Officer based on their experience in school administration.

Data collection methods and instruments.

The study used questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis as the main tools for collecting data. The tools were preferred because they are flexible to the sample category and would easily generate detailed data from the respondents. The researcher was mainly concerned with the views, opinions, and perceptions of respondents concerning the problem under study through probing for clarity during interviews. Such information could be collected by the use of questionnaires and interview techniques.

Questionnaires.

A questionnaire is a data collection instrument used to gather data from a large number of respondents (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Both open and closed-ended questions were used in this study. Self-administered questionnaires were given to teachers and pupils; they were required to read and answer the questions given.

Interview Guide.

Interviews are a good method of data collection since they allow the researcher to seek clarification in case he/she do not understand a given concept, something one cannot do in the case of a questionnaire (McLeod, 2014). Interview schedules were administered to head teachers, parents, and A.E.O. Face-to-face interaction with key informants was done, whereby the researcher asked questions written on a piece of paper. Responses given by the interviewees were noted down.

Documentary Review

The researcher requested documents from school administrators and the Education Office. The documents requested included end-of-term reports, end-of-year reports, class registers, school PLE results for the previous years, and district assessment reports from the education officer, which were all reviewed.

Quality control methods

To ensure the quality of the data, two quality control methods were used in this study, which included:

Validity.

Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results. Validity is the degree to which the results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Validity of research instruments was achieved by ensuring that test items covered all objectives and variables of the study. Consultations and discussions with the supervisor were conducted to establish the content validity. A content validity test was conducted using the CVI, whose formula is:

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number relevant items}}{\text{Total Number of Items}} \times 100$$

When the CVI value became 70% or above, then the instruments were considered valid. However, the instruments were corrected to remove unworthy items.

Reliability

Random errors arise from unclear instructions to the respondents, ambiguous questionnaires, or attention deficit during interviews.

The researcher minimized random errors by cross-checking the questionnaires during piloting. Piloting was done to test whether the research instruments were clearly stated and whether they were meaningful to respondents. The schools involved in the pilot study were not considered in the final study. During piloting, the researcher checked the flow of questions in questionnaires and interviews, and whether he would have problems in asking questions and filling in questionnaires. The results were compiled and used to improve the consistency and validity of the results in the final data collection exercise. The exercise was done in 2 private schools to enable the researcher to modify, restructure, and eliminate any ambiguous items.

Data analysis techniques

The data collected was coded and tested for completeness and then analysed using descriptive and inferential

statistics using the statistical package of social science (SPSS) and presented using tables, charts, and graphs for easy interpretation. Chi-squares and regression analysis were used to establish the relationship between variables. These types of inferential statistics are easy to compute and interpret, and they also help in making conclusions. Descriptive statistical techniques (frequencies and percentages) were employed to analyse field data from questionnaires to assist in the interpretation of data.

Ethical considerations.

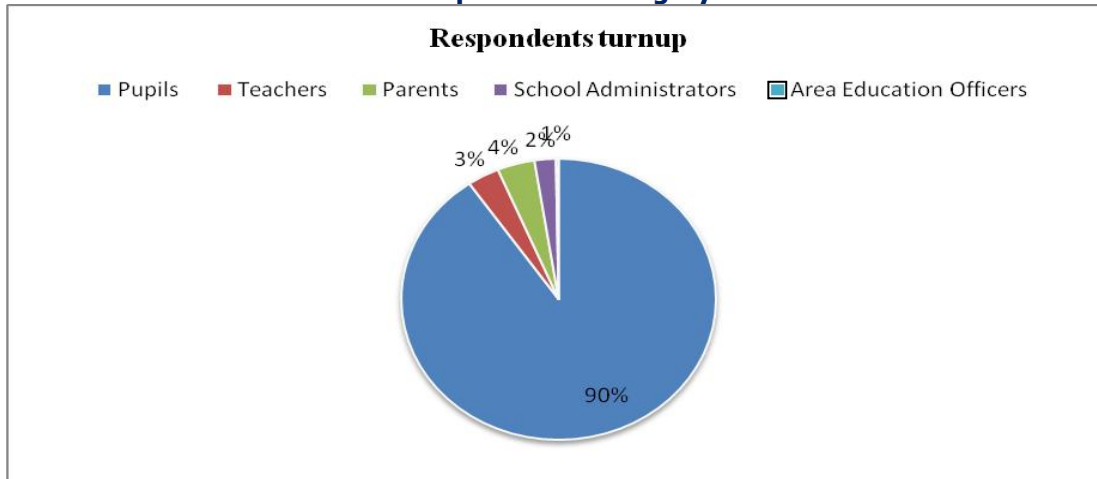
The researcher established a good rapport with the respondents by ensuring that the purpose of the study and its potential benefits were clearly explained. The research was conducted under the condition of confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents. This was done by assuring the respondents that the study would be used for academic purposes only. Further, the respondents' names did not appear anywhere in the data write-up.

Result.

Biographic Information.

Under this section, the period spent in the school, gender of respondents, age, number of pupils in class, and position in class are addressed.

Respondents' category.



In response, respondents who participated in the study included pupils, teachers, parents, school administrators, as well as the Area Education Officer, with the following breakdown: with 90% being pupils, 4% being parents, 3% being teachers of the schools, 2% being school

administrators, and the remaining 1% being the area education officer.

The majority of the study respondents were pupils because they were the main study respondents.

Demographics of respondents.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Period Spent by Pupils in the School						
Period		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent		Cumulative Percent
	1-3 years	100	30.5	30.5		30.5
	4-5 years	59	18.0	18.0		48.5
	6-7 years	77	23.5	23.5		72.0
	8-10 years	92	28.0	28.0		100.0
Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent		Cumulative Percent
	Boys	141	43.0	43.0		43.0
	Girls	187	57.0	57.0		100.0
Age Group of Respondents						
Age Bracket		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent		Cumulative Percent
	8-10	18	5.5	5.5		5.5
	11-12	131	39.9	39.9		45.4
	13-14	134	40.9	40.9		86.3
	above 14 years	45	13.7	13.7		100.0
Number of Pupils Frequency			Percent	Valid Percent		Cumulative Percent
	10-40	14	4.3	4.3		4.3
	41-70	252	76.8	76.8		81.1
	71-100	62	18.9	18.9		100.0
Presence of Parents						
Parents Alive			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Yes		288	87.8	87.8	87.8
	No		40	12.2	12.2	100.0

Table 3 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents as follows: 30.5% had spent 1-3 years in the schools; 28.0% had spent 8-10 years; 23.5% had spent 6-7 years in the schools, whereas the remaining (18.0%) had spent 4-5 years in the schools. Being the district schools, dues were increasing now and then, which influenced pupils to re-allocate to schools where their parents could afford school dues.

About the gender of the study respondents, girls reported the highest percent with 57% whereas Boys were represented by 43%. More girls participated in the study than boys.

Regarding the age group of the study participants, 40.9% respondents were in the age group of 13-14; 39.9%

respondents were in the age group of 11-12; 13.7% respondents were in the age group of above 14 years, and 5.5% respondents were in the age group of 8-10 years. Respondents in the age group of 13-14 years dominated because the study targeted pupils in upper classes of primary education.

In response to the pupils in class, 76.8% respondents indicated that there were 41-70 pupils; 18.9% respondents indicated 71-100 pupils, whereas the remaining percentage of 4.3%

Respondents indicated 10-40 pupils in class.

Finally, 12.2% of respondents were orphans.

Influence of parents' level of education on pupils' academic performance.

Parents/Guardians' level of education

Identifying parents/guardians' level of education is crucial under this study since it portrays the category of family

background from which pupils come. In this regard, the parents'/guardians' levels of education were sought from pupils. Further, the levels ranged from never having gone to school up to the degree level of education.

Table 4: Parents/Guardians Level of Education

Mothers/education level of education					
	Degree	41	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Diploma	27	8.2	8.2	20.7
	Certificate	46	14.0	14.0	34.8
	Secondary	76	23.2	23.2	57.9
	Primary	108	32.9	32.9	90.9
	Never went to school	30	9.1	9.1	100.0
	Total	328	100.0	100.0	
Fathers/Guardians Level of Education					
Education level		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Degree	49	14.9	14.9	14.9
	Diploma	29	8.8	8.8	23.8
	Certificate	49	14.9	14.9	38.7
	Secondary	101	30.8	30.8	69.5
	Primary	88	26.8	26.8	96.3
	Never went to school	12	3.7	3.7	100.0
	Total	328	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2025.

As indicated in Table 4, 30.8% respondents had completed secondary education, 26.8% respondents had completed primary level of education, and only 3.7% fathers/guardians had never gone to school.

Also, findings from the mothers'/guardians' level of education revealed that 32.9% mothers/guardians had completed primary education, 23.2% had completed secondary education, whereas only 8.2% had completed a diploma. The majority of the pupils' parents/guardians had completed at least the primary level, and thus could interpret the pupils' academic performance.

Regarding the ability of parents to interpret pupils' academic performance, a mother from one of the participating schools said that:

My children go to school every day, and in the evening when they come, they have to show me what they have studied. If they pass the teachers' work well, I give them some rewards to work harder, and those who fail the

teachers' work, I punish them and tell them to always pay attention to the teacher.

Another parent said that:

"Every morning when my children go to school, I follow them behind to see whether they actually arrive at school. I have even gone further to inquire from teachers at what time my children reach school and how they behave while at school".

Contrary to how the above parents responded, another parent, when interviewed, said this:

"When I send children to study, and they don't, it is up to them. If they don't study, they are the ones to suffer in the future, not me."

In relation to this, the head teacher of one school said that, *"Mothers are the most active parents in our school programs, especially attending meetings and following up their children in schools, but what pains me most is the fact that most of them are unemployed and dependent on their*

husbands, who are not supportive at all in providing for their children”.

From the participants’ views, it can be seen that parents’ involvement in pupils’ academic performance is largely associated with their educational background. It is

observed that parents who have high education levels can influence their children to go to school, in addition to making follow-ups and monitoring the performance of a child in school. On the other hand, parents with low education levels seem not to care.

Table 5: Parents/Guardians Education Level

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My parents check my books and homework	328	1.70	1.042
My parents assist me in doing my homework	328	2.43	1.355
My parents sign my academic homework	328	3.24	1.320
My parents write comments about my homework	328	3.22	1.382
My parents read and reply the letters from school	328	2.01	1.131
I have enough time at home to study	328	1.97	1.050
My parents give me a lot of domestic work to do at home	328	3.36	1.429
My parents deny me time for revision at home	328	3.77	1.398

Scores from the 8 point Likert scale concerning the parents’/guardians’ level of education indicated that parents checking books and homework with mean scores of $M=1.70$, $SD=1.042$, parents’ assistance in doing pupils home work ($M=2.43$, $SD=1.355$), parents reading and replying the letters from school ($M=2.01$, $SD=1.131$) and pupils having enough time at home to study with ($M=1.97$, $SD=1.050$) were the tool items that were more influencing pupils’ academic performance.

Other tool items, such as parents signing academic homework ($M=3.24$, $SD=1.320$), parents writing comments about homework ($M=3.22$, $SD=1.382$), parents giving pupils a lot of domestic work to do at home ($M=3.36$, $SD=1.429$), and parents denying pupils time for revision at home ($M=3.77$, $SD=1.398$) were less influential in determining the academic performance of pupils. When asked about her involvement in helping her child with homework, a parent of a child at one of the schools responded that:

“I never studied because of not knowing the value of education. But I want my children to study and get jobs in government and be paid a salary every month like their teachers are”.

In some schools, teachers were found complaining about the laxity of some parents in providing for their children. For example, a male teacher from one of the schools said, *“Most parents don’t know the value of education, and we find it hard to convince them to provide for their children’s needs for effective learning”.*

This clearly indicates that pupils with parents/guardians who are educated, especially professionally, have an advantage in being assisted in homework since parents always want their children to communicate. On the other hand, when a parent is not educated, the child is likely to face inadequate guidance in homework, which may affect his/her performance at school as well.

Indicators of pupils’ academic performance

In an attempt to understand indicators of pupils’ academic performance, the respondents gave their opinions based on a five-point Likert scale of “strongly agree” (SA), “agree” (A), “undecided” (UD), “disagree” (D), and “strongly disagree” (SD). To ease the analysis, the percentages for “strongly agree” and “agree” were aggregated together to represent “agree”, and the percentages for “strongly disagree” and “disagree” were also aggregated together to represent “disagree”. Data was analyzed using percentages and the mean.

Table 6: descriptive statistics on pupils’ academic performance

Statement	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	Std.
	(12.5%)	(8.1%)	(2.9%)	(70.6%)	(5.9%)		
Performance standards in terms of grade scores in this school are high	8 (5.9%)	18 (13.2%)	6 (4.4%)	98 (72.1%)	6 (4.4%)	3.60	.617
Students level of self-awareness is high	11	14	4	106	1	3.86	.813

pupils perform better in weekly tests and end of term exams	12 (8.8%)	11 (8.1%)	6 (4.4%)	101 (74.3%)	6 (4.4%)	3.30	.694
I am satisfied with the level of students' academic performance in this school	11 (8.1%)	11 (8.1%)	3 (2.2%)	103 (75.7%)	8 (5.9%)	3.66	.638
pupils perform well in end of term exams	13 (9.6%)	9 (6.6%)	6 (4.4%)	99 (72.8%)	9 (6.6%)	3.78	.731

Source: Primary data, 2025.

Table 6 shows that 76.5% agreed that performance standards in terms of grade scores in this school are high (Mean 3.60; Standard deviation 0.617). Regarding pupils' academic performance, 78.7% agreed that students perform better in weekly tests and exams (Mean= 3.30; Standard deviation= 0.694). Also, 81.6% agreed that they are satisfied with the level of pupils' academic performance in this school (Mean 3.66; Standard deviation 0.638). Finally, 79.4% agreed that students perform well in end-of-term exams (Mean= 3.78; Standard deviation= 0.731). This implies that the level of pupils' academic performance in

Buvuma District is somewhat good, as portrayed by positive responses from the participants.

Bivariate Correlation Results for parents' education level and academic performance

Inferentially, the researcher used the Pearson Correlation Product Moment technique to aid in establishing the relationship between parents' education level and pupils' academic performance, with the following representing the results obtained.

Table 7: Bivariate correlation results for Parents education level and pupil's academic performance

		Parents education level	Academic performance
Parents education level	Pearson Correlation	1	.586**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	328	.000
	N		328
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.586**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	328
	N	328	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: primary data

Table 7 shows results that were obtained with R as .586**, Significance or sig 2-tailed as .000, and N as 328. Based on the correlation results obtained, it can be noted that a

positive relationship existed between Education level and academic performance, meaning that improved income level of parents enhances academic performance of pupils.

Linear Regression results for Parents education level and Academic performance.

Table 8: Regression results for Parents education level in Academic performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.586 ^a	.344	.333	.53343

a. predictors: (constant), Parents education level in Academic performance

Source: primary data

Table 8 shows linear regression results obtained, thus R value as .586**, R² as .344, adjusted R² as .333, and standard error of estimate as .53343. Based on the results, it is suggested that 33.3% (.333 x100%) explained the

extent of variance that Parents' education level had on the Academic performance, while the remaining percentage score of 66.7% can be attributed to factors not part of the study.

Discussion of results.

The influence of parents' level of education on pupils' academic performance.

The majority had completed secondary level of education (30.8%). On the other hand, the majority of the mothers/guardians (32.9%) had completed the primary level of education. The majority of the parents had attained some level of education. Few parents/guardians had completed degrees as the highest level, yet according to Sarigiani (1990), parental level of education is significantly related to the educational attainment of their children in both rural and national samples. Children from parents with higher education levels tend to do better than those from parents with low education levels because the latter may form a cycle of uneducated family members. Therefore, pupils with parents who did not go to school or with a low educational background faced problems such as being stopped from daily attendance at school by illiterate parents, lacking parental support on homework, and sometimes being discouraged from going to school by both parents and their classmates, thus affecting the performance of a child.

In addition, findings showed that parents checking books and homework ($M=1.70$, $SD=1.042$), parents assisting pupils in doing homework ($M=2.43$, $SD=1.355$), parents reading and replying to the letters from school ($M=2.01$, $SD=1.131$) and pupils having enough time at home to study with ($M=1.97$, $SD=1.050$), indicated positive statistical influence implying that such items were being practiced. This is in line with Zehri and Abdelbaki's (2013) findings, who submitted that parents' educational background influences the academic achievement of students. This is because the parents are in a good position to be second teachers to the child, and even guide and counsel the child on the best way to perform well in education, and provide the necessary materials needed by the child.

Although most studies show that the education level of parents affects how well children perform in school (Adekey, 2002; Akujieze, 2003; Rothstein, 2004), in some cases, parents who had little or no education usually ensured that their children received a good education. It is believed that a child from a well-educated family with high socio-economic status is more likely to perform better than a child from an illiterate family (Rothstein, 2004). Children with parents who never went to school or with a low educational background were affected by such factors since they did not assist in homework, did not read the letters assigned to them from school, and had no time for them.

On the other hand, factors such as parents signing academic homework, parents writing comments on homework, parents giving a lot of domestic work to do at home, and parents denying time for revision at home were less practiced.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the parental level of education was statistically significant towards pupils' academic performance in Buvuma district. The educational attainment of their children in both rural and national samples was easily influenced by their conducive home study environment.

Recommendation.

The study made recommendations to different stakeholders, such as the government (policy makers), the school administrators, the parents, and opinion leaders, to consider so that good academic performance of pupils in Buvuma district is attained.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to the Almighty God for granting me life, wisdom, strength, and good health throughout the process of preparing this research proposal.

My sincere appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Mulumba Fawz, for his tireless guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback, which have been instrumental in shaping the quality of this work.

I also wish to thank the administration of Team University, particularly the Faculty of Graduate Studies, for providing the necessary academic environment and support to pursue this study.

Special thanks go to the headteachers, directors of studies, and teachers in the government-aided primary schools of Busamuzi Subcounty, Buvuma District, for their cooperation and willingness to participate in the study.

Finally, I acknowledge with gratitude the support, love, and encouragement from my family and friends, whose moral, spiritual, and emotional backing has kept me motivated and focused until the completion of this proposal.

List of abbreviations

UPE – Universal Primary Education
AEO – Area Education Officer
MEO – Municipal Education Officer
UGX – Ugandan Shillings
BD – Buvuma District
PLE – Primary Leaving Examination
PEO – Principal Education Officer

Source of funding

The study was not funded

Conflict of interest.

There is no conflict of interest.

Availability of data.

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

The author's contribution.

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

Author's biography.

James Higenyi Nesomi is a student of a master's degree in Education Planning and Management at the School of Graduate Studies and Research, Team University.
Dr Fawz Mulumba is a research supervisor at the School of Graduate Studies and Research, Team University.

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