

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONS ABSENTEEISM FACTORS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TORORO DISTRICT; A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY.

Peter Bayeke*, Muhammad Sendagi
School of Graduate Studies and Research, Team University

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ABSTRACT.

Background:

This study aimed to explore the relationship between teacher-student absenteeism factors and academic performance among secondary school students in Tororo District.

Methodology:

The research design employed a descriptive, cross-sectional approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study population included students in S4, teachers, and head teachers from four selected secondary schools in Tororo District.

The sample size of 160 participants was determined using Krejcie & Morgan's table, employing purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Data collection involved primary sources through questionnaires and interviews, as well as secondary data through document analysis. The instruments were carefully designed to align with research objectives, questions, and hypotheses, ensuring comprehensive data collection.

Results:

59.3% were male and 40.7% were female. This shows that the sample was slightly biased towards males. Correlational findings revealed significant positive associations between teacher-student relations and academic performance. Regression models indicated that school environment, family background, and teacher-student absenteeism factors had a significant positive impact on academic performance.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, absenteeism, influenced by various factors, significantly negatively affected the academic performance of secondary school students in Tororo District.

Recommendations:

Recommendations included improving school facilities, enhancing sanitation, increasing access to learning resources, updating teaching methods, improving teacher attendance, and promoting parental involvement. Areas for further research were identified, such as investigating specific teaching methods and exploring the long-term effects of absenteeism on students' academic performance.

Keywords: *Teacher-Student, Absenteeism Factors, Academic Performance, Secondary School Students, Tororo District.*

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Corresponding author: *Peter Bayeke**

Email: *baypeter2019@gmail.com*

School of Graduate Studies and Research, Team University.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.

Teacher-student relations refer to the interactions and dynamics between teachers and students in an educational setting. These relationships can have a significant impact on students' academic performance, social and emotional development, and overall well-being (Keane, 2022). Positive teacher-student relations are characterized by mutual respect, trust, understanding, and effective communication. Teachers who foster positive relationships with their students are more likely to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment where

students feel safe, valued, and motivated to learn (Longobardi, 2021).

The academic performance of students in secondary schools within Tororo District has been subpar for some time now (Tororo District Education Department, 2022). This has been evidenced by the consistently low exam results and poor performance in national examinations (Atyayi, 2023). This has become a cause for concern among parents, teachers, and education officials in the district. Several efforts have been put in place to improve student attendance in classrooms and academic performance, including the implementation of various interventions and programs (Waninda, 2021). One such

program is regular academic monitoring and evaluation systems that have been put in place to identify students who are struggling academically (Onyait, 2022). These students are then provided with special attention and support, including targeted tutoring and personalized study plans. However, academic performance remains relatively low. If this performance is not improved, it may result in limited options for furthering education and career advancement (Orukan, 2021). This study aimed to explore the relationship between teacher-student absenteeism factors and academic performance among secondary school students in Tororo District.

METHODOLOGY.

Table 1: Population of the study.

Secondary Schools	Students	Teachers	Headteacher	Population size
Bukedi SS	56	13	1	70
Global HS	67	16	1	84
Tororo Comprehensive SS	48	10	1	59
Rock HS	52	12	1	65
Total	223	51	4	278

Sample size.

Table 2: Sample Size and Sampling Technique.

School	Population	Sample size	Sampling method
Headteacher	04	04	Purposive sampling
Students	223	125	Simple random sampling
Teachers	51	31	Simple random sampling
Total	278	160	

The study adopted the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table in determining sample size. Therefore, 160 respondents were selected from 278 participants. Therefore, four head teachers, 125 students, and 31 teachers were selected to represent the views of the target population.

Sampling Techniques.

Sampling is the process of selecting elements from a population in such a way that the sample elements selected represent the population. This means that as much as possible, most characteristics of the population should be represented in the sample selected (Amin, 2005).

The study selected the respondents for the study using simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques.

Students and teachers were selected using a simple random sampling technique and the method was used to avoid bias in the findings since each respondent had the same opportunity of participating in the study.

Headteachers were selected using purposive sampling. The technique was used to acquire key information from

Research design.

The study used a descriptive, cross-sectional design, whereby; the researcher collected data at appropriate points in time. The study further used both qualitative and quantitative approaches hence a mixed survey design. Qualitative techniques were applied to the data collected using documentary review while Quantitative techniques were applied to collecting numerical data.

Study Population.

The population of this study consisted of students in S4, teachers, and head teachers of the selected secondary schools in Tororo district. The study used four secondary schools within in Tororo District.

head teachers who were considered to possess the specific knowledge and experience relevant to the research objectives. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to deliberately select participants who can provide the most valuable insights and information for the study. By targeting head teachers, who are at the forefront of educational institutions, the research aims to obtain comprehensive and authoritative perspectives on the topic.

Data Collection Methods.

For this study, both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data was collected using questionnaires while secondary data was collected using the documentary review method. The use of both primary and secondary data in this study allows for the incorporation of different sources of information, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

Collecting primary data through questionnaires enables the researchers to directly gather information from respondents. This approach ensures that the data gathered is specific to the study's research objectives and can

provide insights into participants' perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors. Questionnaires can be customized to collect data on specific variables of interest, allowing for a more focused analysis.

On the other hand, the use of secondary data through the documentary review method involves reviewing existing documents and records that are relevant to the study. This included academic articles, reports, government publications, and organizational records. Secondary data provides valuable historical, contextual, and background information that can support or validate the findings from the primary data. Additionally, using secondary data is cost-effective and time-saving because it bypasses the need for data collection.

By using both primary and secondary data, the study benefits from a triangulation approach, wherein the findings from different sources are compared, contrasted, and integrated. Triangulation helps to strengthen the overall validity of the study by minimizing biases and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Data Collection Instruments.

To collect data using various methods, the researcher developed specific data collection instruments. These instruments were designed in a way that the questions closely aligned with the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses of the study. This ensured that the necessary information was collected to address the research objectives.

The data collection instruments included questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. Each instrument was tailored to the specific method of data collection.

For questionnaires, the study designed a set of questions that were administered to respondents. These questions were categorized into sections that corresponded with the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses. The questions in the questionnaire were designed to be close-ended. This allowed respondents to provide additional information about the study variables, apart from just selecting options from a given set of responses.

For interviews, the study developed a structured or semi-structured set of questions that were aligned with the research objectives. The questions were designed to elicit in-depth responses from the interviewees. The interview instrument also included probes or follow-up questions to delve further into specific areas of interest related to the research objectives.

For document analysis, the study developed a data collection instrument that outlined the specific types of documents to be analyzed. This could include reports, articles, policies, or other relevant written materials. The instrument provided guidelines on how to systematically analyze and extract data from these documents.

In each data collection instrument, the questions or guidelines were carefully designed to align with the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses. This ensured that the collected data would provide insights and answers to the research objectives. The use of close-ended

questions in the instruments allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the study variables by allowing respondents to provide additional information beyond predefined response options.

Validity.

To ensure the accuracy of the research instruments, the study calculated the Content Validity Index (CVI= n/N). The study consulted the research supervisor as the expert to rank the accuracy of the research instrument in collecting data for the study. The study identified 17 questions as relevant and only 3 as irrelevant hence the number of relevant questions (n) was divided by the total number of questions in the research instrument ($17/20 = 0.85$). The Content Validity Index was greater than 0.7 hence a good measure of validity and the instrument was valid to collect data for this study. The 3 irrelevant questions were eliminated from the instrument with the guidance of the supervisor.

Reliability.

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is a statistical measure that quantifies the internal consistency of a test or scale. It reflects the degree to which the items or questions in the instrument are measuring the same underlying construct or concept. A higher Cronbach's Alpha coefficient indicates greater internal consistency and, therefore, higher reliability of the instrument.

To calculate Cronbach's Alpha, the variance of the observed total test scores ($\Sigma\text{Var}(X)$) and the variance of each component or item ($\Sigma\text{Var}(X_i)$) are needed. The formula divides the sum of the variances of the items by the sum of the total variance, corrected for the number of items.

In this case, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient obtained was 0.78. Since it is above the threshold of 0.7 as proposed by Amin (2005), it can be concluded that the research instruments used in the study were reliable. This means that the items or questions within the instruments were measuring the same underlying construct consistently. The closer the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is to 1.0, the better the reliability of the instrument. Therefore, a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.78 indicates a reasonably high level of reliability.

Reliability of the research instruments was achieved by designing the instruments with unambiguous items or questions that accurately measure the intended construct. The items were carefully selected and reviewed to ensure they were relevant and comprehensive. Additionally, pilot testing may have been conducted to assess the clarity and consistency of the items.

By calculating Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, the researcher was able to statistically assess the internal consistency of the instruments. The coefficient provides a numerical value that quantifies the reliability of the instruments, allowing the researcher to determine the extent to which the instruments produce consistent results.

In summary, reliability in this study was achieved by ensuring unambiguous items, selecting relevant and comprehensive items, and conducting statistical analysis using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to assess internal consistency. The obtained coefficient of 0.78 indicates that the research instruments were reliable for measuring the intended construct.

Ethical Consideration.

The study sought permission from the School of Graduate Studies and Research and obtained an introductory letter to go within the field.

The study also sought the consent of the respondents to participate in the study and briefed them to feel free to provide relevant information for the study. Further, the researcher informed the respondents about the purpose of the research project and the expected outcome of the study.

The study also assured the respondents that the information provided was to be treated with maximum confidentiality and was to only be used for academic purposes.

Further, the study credited and extended his gratitude to all previous researchers whose literature has contributed to this study and did not allow taking their work as hers.

Data Analysis.

The data analysis process involved several steps to ensure reliability and accuracy.

First, the data had to be carefully classified, edited, and coded. This meant systematically organizing the data, checking for any errors or inconsistencies, and assigning codes to different variables. The classification helped in categorizing the data based on specific characteristics while editing involved checking for any missing or incorrect data and correcting them. Coding was done to assign numerical values or labels to different variables, which would be used in the analysis.

For this analysis, Microsoft Excel was used as the software tool for classifying, editing, and coding the data.

Excel provides a user-friendly interface for managing and manipulating data, making it suitable for these initial steps in the data analysis process.

Once the data was appropriately classified, edited, and coded, it was then exported to SPSS version 23 for further analysis. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is a popular software tool used for statistical analysis.

In this analysis, the study used the Pearson correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between the study variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. This analysis helped determine whether there was a significant correlation between student absenteeism and academic performance in Tororo District.

Additionally, multiple regression models were used to analyze the relationship between student absenteeism and academic performance in Tororo District. Multiple regression is a statistical technique that allows the researcher to examine the relationship between one dependent variable (in this case, academic performance) and several independent variables (including student absenteeism). The researcher was likely interested in understanding how student absenteeism contributes to variations in academic performance, after controlling for other potential factors.

By using multiple regression models, the researcher could estimate the unique contribution of student absenteeism to academic performance while accounting for other variables that may also impact academic performance. The results of the multiple regression analysis would provide insights into the strength and significance of the relationship between student absenteeism and academic performance, as well as any other factors that may be influencing academic performance in Tororo District.

RESULTS.

The response rate for the study.

Table 3: Response rate.

Respondents	Issued questionnaires and interviews requested	Returned questionnaires and interviews conducted	Response rate (%)
Students	125	116	92.8
Teachers	31	30	96.8
Headteachers	4	4	100
Total	160	150	93.8

According to table 3, a total of 125 questionnaires were issued to students, out of which 116 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 92.8%. This indicates a relatively high level of participation among the student population.

For teachers, a total of 31 questionnaires and interviews were requested, with 30 being returned. This reflects a response rate of 96.8%, indicating a high level of engagement from the teaching staff. In the case of head teachers, all 4 interviews were conducted, resulting in a

response rate of 100%. This indicates full participation and willingness to contribute from the head teachers of the secondary schools in Tororo District.

Overall, the total number of questionnaires and interviews issued for the study was 160, with 150 being returned. This resulted in an overall response rate of 93.8%, indicating a high level of participation from all three groups of respondents - students, teachers, and head teachers.

The high response rates in this study suggest that there is strong interest and commitment from the participants to contribute to the research on student absenteeism and

academic performance in secondary schools in Tororo District. These findings provide a solid foundation for conducting further analysis and drawing meaningful conclusions

Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The researcher used gender, age, marital status, and level of education as demographic characteristics of the respondents and the findings are as follows.

Table 4: Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	89	59.3%
Female	61	40.7%
Total	150	100%
Age (years)		
10-18	116	77.3%
19-45	28	18.7%
46+	6	4%
Total	150	100%
Marital status		
Single (students)	116	77.3%
Married	30	20%
Separated	4	2.7%
Widowed	0	0%
Total	150	100%
Level of education		
Secondary	116	77.3%
Primary	0	0%
University	34	22.7%
Total	100	100%

According to table 4, Findings showed that out of the 150 respondents, 59.3% were male and 40.7% were female. This shows that the sample was slightly biased towards males.

The majority of the respondents (77.3%) were between the ages of 10-18 years, indicating that the sample consisted mainly of school-aged students. Only a small percentage (18.7%) were in the age group of 19-45, and an even smaller percentage (4%) were 46 years and above. This suggests that the survey was mainly conducted among students.

Among the respondents, the majority (77.3%) were students, indicating that they were not married or in a relationship. 20% were married, 2.7% were separated, and none were widowed. This further supports the idea that the survey was conducted among a school-aged population.

The majority of the respondents (77.3%) had a primary level of education, indicating that they were pupils. None of the respondents had a secondary level of education, and

22.7% had a university education. This again confirms that the survey was primarily conducted among school-aged children.

In summary, the demographic characteristics of the respondents indicate that the survey was predominantly conducted among school-aged students, with a slight bias towards males. The majority of the respondents were single students with a secondary level of education.

Teacher-student relations absenteeism factors and academic performance of students in secondary schools in Tororo district.

The researcher used descriptive analysis of responses that were captured using a Likert 5-point scale where 1- Strongly disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3-Not sure (NS), 4- Agree (D), 5-Strongly Agree (SD)

Table 5: Teacher-student relations absenteeism factors and academic performance of students in secondary schools in Tororo district.

	Mean	Standard deviation
The absence of a reliable and inconsistent presence of teachers hinders students' ability to regularly participate in class discussions	4.6	0.4
Teacher absenteeism can lead to inadequate syllabus coverage making it more difficult for them to grasp complex concepts	4.2	0.6
Teachers' absence limit access to important resources, such as textbooks, reference materials, and guidance in completing assignments and projects negatively impacting the academic performance of students	4.4	0.4
Teachers' absence may result in students' engagement in disruptive behavior creating a chaotic learning environment and distracting other students, negatively impacting their academic performance.	1.3	0.4
Absenteeism among teachers limits opportunities for one-on-one interactions and personalized attention to students hindering their progress and ability to perform well academically.	2.2	1.4

Based on the findings, the statement “the absence of a reliable and inconsistent presence of teachers significantly hinders students' ability to regularly participate in class discussions, ask questions, and seek clarification, leading to a decline in academic performance”. On average, respondents strongly agreed with this statement (mean = 4.6) and there was little variation in their responses (standard deviation = 0.4).

Teacher absenteeism can lead to inadequate syllabus coverage, making it more difficult for students to grasp complex concepts and perform academically. The respondents agreed with this statement (mean = 4.2) and there was some variation in their responses (standard deviation = 0.6).

Teachers' absence may limit access to important resources, such as textbooks, reference materials, and guidance in completing assignments and projects, negatively impacting academic performance. The respondents strongly agreed with this statement (mean = 4.4) and there was little variation in their responses (standard deviation = 0.4).

Teachers' absence may result in students' engagement in disruptive behavior, creating a chaotic learning environment and distracting other students, which negatively impacts their academic performance. On

average, respondents strongly disagreed with this statement (mean = 1.3) and there was little variation in their responses (standard deviation = 0.4).

Absenteeism among teachers limits opportunities for one-on-one interactions and personalized attention to students, hindering their progress and ability to perform well academically. The respondents disagreed with this statement (mean = 2.2) and there was a higher level of variation in their responses (standard deviation = 1.4).

Overall, the findings indicate that teacher absenteeism negatively affects the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Tororo district. The absence of teachers leads to limited participation, difficulty in grasping concepts, limited access to resources, disruptive behavior, and hindered progress due to lack of personalized attention. These findings highlight the importance of addressing teacher-student relations absenteeism factors to improve academic performance in secondary schools.

Correlational findings between Teacher-student relations and academic performance of students in Tororo district.

Table 6: Correlational findings between teacher-student relations and academic performance of students in Tororo district.

		Teacher-student relations	Academic performance of students
Academic performance of students	Pearson Correlation	0.771**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	116	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that they are highly likely to be true relationships and not due to chance. It is important to note

that these findings are based on a sample of 116 students from Tororo district.

Relationship between absenteeism and academic performance of secondary school students in Tororo District.

Table 7: Regression findings absenteeism and academic performance of secondary school students in Tororo District.

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Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1(Constant)		2.330	.004		2.908
Teacher-student absenteeism factors		.419	.079	0.540	4.986
Independent variable: Absenteeism					
	R square	0.430 ^c			F-statistics
	Adjusted R Square	0.457			Sig.
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t		

Model 1 examines the impact of teachers on academic performance. The unstandardized coefficient for teacher-student absenteeism factors is 0.419, indicating that a one-unit increase in these factors is associated with an increase in academic performance by 0.419 units.

The standardized coefficient shows that teachers have a significant positive impact on academic performance (-0.540). This finding is statistically significant ($t = -4.986$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that teacher-student absenteeism factors are significantly related to higher academic performance. The R square value suggests that teacher-student absenteeism factors explain about 43.0% of the variance in academic performance, and the F-statistics is significant.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.

Based on the findings, the statement “the absence of a reliable and inconsistent presence of teachers significantly hinders students' ability to regularly participate in class discussions, ask questions, and seek clarification, leading to a decline in academic performance”. On average, respondents strongly agreed with this statement (mean = 4.6) and there was little variation in their responses (standard deviation = 0.4).

Teacher absenteeism can lead to inadequate syllabus coverage, making it more difficult for students to grasp complex concepts and perform academically. The respondents agreed with this statement (mean = 4.2) and there was some variation in their responses (standard deviation = 0.6).

Teachers' absence may limit access to important resources, such as textbooks, reference materials, and guidance in completing assignments and projects, negatively impacting academic performance. The respondents strongly agreed with this statement (mean = 4.4) and there was little variation in their responses (standard deviation = 0.4).

Teachers' absence may result in students' engagement in disruptive behavior, creating a chaotic learning environment and distracting other students, which negatively impacts their academic performance. On average, respondents strongly disagreed with this statement (mean = 1.3) and there was little variation in their responses (standard deviation = 0.4).

Absenteeism among teachers limits opportunities for one-on-one interactions and personalized attention to students, hindering their progress and ability to perform well academically. The respondents disagreed with this statement (mean = 2.2) and there was a higher level of variation in their responses (standard deviation = 1.4).

Overall, the findings indicate that teacher absenteeism negatively affects the academic performance of students in secondary schools in the Tororo district. The absence of teachers leads to limited participation, difficulty in grasping concepts, limited access to resources, disruptive behavior, and hindered progress due to lack of personalized attention. These findings highlight the importance of addressing teacher-student relations absenteeism factors to improve academic performance in secondary schools.

Kearney's (2008) argument about the negative effects of teacher absenteeism on students' continuity of learning and academic performance is supported by research and is a valid concern. When teachers are frequently absent, students can miss out on essential lessons, explanations, and guidance, which can hinder their understanding and retention of the subject matter.

One of the primary reasons why this lack of continuity and consistency in attendance can be detrimental is because learning is a cumulative process. Lessons build upon previous knowledge, and missing out on foundational concepts can make it challenging for students to catch up. Students who frequently experience such interruptions in their learning may struggle to grasp more advanced topics, leading to lower academic performance.

Additionally, the absence of a teacher can disrupt the classroom environment and dynamics. When a substitute teacher is brought in, they may not be familiar with the class or the student's individual needs, leading to a less engaging and effective learning environment. Lack of familiarity and connection between students and substitute teachers can lead to an increase in disciplinary issues and a decrease in overall motivation.

However, it is necessary to acknowledge that student absenteeism itself can also contribute to difficulties in academic performance. When students miss classes, whether due to personal reasons or disinterest, they also disrupt their continuity of learning. Absenteeism can result in missed assignments, incomplete notes, and a lack of participation in classroom discussions and activities. This can lead to gaps in knowledge and a reduced understanding of the material, ultimately affecting academic performance.

While Kearney's focus is on teacher absenteeism, it is essential to consider student absenteeism as a significant factor as well. Both teacher and student absences have the potential to disrupt learning and hinder academic performance. Therefore, addressing absenteeism from both perspectives is crucial for improving students' continuity of learning and overall academic outcomes.

Overall, while Kearney's argument predominantly focuses on teacher absenteeism, both teacher and student absences have the potential to disrupt the continuity of learning and hinder academic performance. Therefore, it is crucial to address absenteeism from both perspectives to ensure students' optimal learning experiences and academic success.

Studies have found a positive association between higher levels of parental education and better academic performance among secondary school students. Parents with higher education tend to have higher aspirations for their children, provide better educational resources and support, and instill a value for education, which can positively impact students' academic achievement (Davis-Kean 2005; & Sirin, 2005).

Moreover, it is crucial to consider the potential limitations of the studies themselves. Factors such as sample size, self-report biases, and lack of control for confounding variables may affect the reliability and generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the studies mentioned are from different years, which might limit their relevance to the present context of Tororo District. It is essential to conduct local studies that specifically address absenteeism and academic performance in Tororo District to gain a more accurate understanding of the relationship between these factors.

In conclusion, while the studies cited suggest a positive association between parental education and academic performance, it is important to contextualize these findings about absenteeism and the specific dynamics of Tororo District. Further research is necessary to assess the impact of absenteeism on students' academic performance in this district and to explore the interplay between parental education, absenteeism, and other relevant factors.

CONCLUSIONS.

Findings indicate that absenteeism, whether influenced by teacher-student factors, has a significant positive impact on the academic performance of secondary school students in Tororo District.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

- I. Update teaching methods and materials: Teachers should address the issue of outdated teaching methods and insufficient teaching materials. Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their teaching methods, encourage the use of interactive and innovative teaching strategies, and ensure access to up-to-date teaching materials.
- II. Improve teacher attendance and punctuality: Managements of secondary schools should implement measures to address the issue of teachers frequently missing classes or arriving late. This may include monitoring and enforcing attendance policies, providing support to teachers who may be facing challenges that affect their attendance, and promoting a culture of punctuality and professionalism among teachers.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.

AET: Absence Exploitation Theory
BOG: Board of Governors

MoEST: Ministry of Education Science and Technology
SCM: School Management Committee
SPSS: Special Package for Social Sciences
UCE: Uganda Certificate of Education
UACE: Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST.

The author declares no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY.


1. Peter Bayeke, Master Student In Educational Planning, And Management Of School Of Graduate Studies And Research Team University
2. Dr. Sendagi Muhamad, lecturer at the School of Graduate Studies And Research Team University.

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