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The influence of financial incentives on the performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Kajara County, Ntungamo District. A cross-sectional study.

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Abstract

Background
Financial incentives play a crucial role in enhancing teacher motivation and performance, particularly in public secondary schools. This study investigates the influence of financial incentives on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Kajara County, Ntungamo District, Uganda.

Methodology
The study used a descriptive correlational cross-sectional design under a mixed-methods approach to examine teacher motivation and performance. From a target of 300 respondents, 169 were selected through purposive and stratified sampling. Data were gathered using questionnaires, interviews, and document reviews. Quantitative data were analyzed with SPSS (Version 25) using descriptive and correlational statistics, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed.

Results
The majority of the participants, 56.7% of respondents, were male, and 36.0% were aged 30–39 years. Descriptive findings showed that teachers strongly agreed they receive monthly salaries (Mean = 3.78, SD = 1.14) but disagreed that the salary is sufficient (Mean = 2.01, SD = 1.02) or paid on time (Mean = 2.34, SD = 1.10). The overall mean of 2.24 (SD = 1.00) indicated general dissatisfaction with financial incentives. Teacher performance was rated low (Overall Mean = 2.25, SD = 1.03), with teachers showing limited lesson preparation, poor punctuality, and low engagement in co-curricular activities. A strong positive correlation was found between financial incentives and teacher performance ($r = 0.786$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that improved financial motivation significantly enhances performance outcomes.

Conclusion
It was established that inadequate, irregular, and inequitable financial incentives undermine teacher motivation and performance.

Recommendations
There is a need to provide timely salary payments, introduction of performance-based rewards, provision of housing and transport allowances, and strengthen of teacher SACCO support schemes to enhance teacher productivity and educational quality in public schools.

Keywords: *Financial incentives, Teacher performance, Public secondary schools, Kajara County, Uganda*
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Background

Financial incentives play a crucial role in enhancing teacher motivation and performance, particularly in public secondary schools where financial rewards and benefits strongly influence commitment and productivity. These incentives include salaries, allowances, bonuses, and other monetary benefits, which serve as important hygiene factors in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959). In Uganda, many teachers in public school's report dissatisfaction with their financial compensation due to low and irregular pay, lack of performance-based bonuses, and inadequate fringe benefits, which negatively affect morale and overall performance (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Baguma, 2010). Baguma (2010) notes that financial limitations reduce teacher motivation and willingness to invest additional effort in teaching-related activities.

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Original Article

Inadequate financial incentives in Uganda's public education system contribute to low performance, absenteeism, and high turnover rates, as teachers often seek supplementary income from private tutoring, farming, or informal businesses Mugisha, 2020). Such additional commitments divert time and attention away from teaching, reducing classroom effectiveness. Timely and performance-based remuneration enhances teacher output, with consistent financial rewards such as transport refunds and lunch allowances linked to better attendance and student achievement Tumwesigye, 2014)

Despite government interventions like salary increments and payroll reforms, teacher dissatisfaction persists, and poor performance remains a challenge in some public schools (UNEB, 2022). In rural areas such as Kajara County in Ntungamo District, these challenges are worsened by high living costs and limited access to essential services. Teachers incur extra expenses that make existing salaries inadequate. Therefore, adequate financial incentives are essential to improve teacher motivation, performance, and the overall quality of education in Uganda's public secondary schools. This study, therefore, examines the influence of financial incentives on the performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Kajara County, Ntungamo District.

Methodology

Research design

This study employed a descriptive, correlational, and cross-sectional survey design within a mixed methods approach to comprehensively investigate the motivation and performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Kajara County, Ntungamo District. The study adopted a mixed methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. Quantitative data, obtained through structured questionnaires, allowed for statistical analysis of relationships among variables, while qualitative data, gathered via interviews and focus group discussions, provided a deeper contextual understanding of teachers' motivations, challenges, and experiences.

Population of the study

Table 1: Target population of the study

Schools/ Participants	Rwashamaire H/S	Kagamba SS	Bwongyera G SSS	Kajara SS	Kibatsi H/S	Kiyaga S SS	Muntuyera H/S	Total
BOG	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
Head teachers	01	01	01	01	01	01	01	6
Teachers	24	36	38	22	24	25	65	234
Total	35	47	49	33	35	31	76	300

Source: Ntungamo District Education Department (2024)

The study used a target population of 300 participants that included 60 school management committee members, 6 head teachers and 234 teachers of the selected public secondary schools in Kajara County, Ntungamo District.

Sampling size

Table 2: Population size, sample size and sampling techniques

Respondents	Population size	Sample size	Sampling technique
Board of Guvnors	60	34	Purposive sampling
Head teachers	06	3	Purposive sampling
Teachers	234	132	Stratified sampling
Total	300	169	

Source: Ntungamo District Education Department (2024); Kreijcie & Morgan (1970).

The study involved a sample size of 169 respondents drawn from a total population of 300 individuals within the public secondary schools in Kajara County, Ntungamo District. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a representative sample was selected to ensure the validity and generalizability of the findings. Specifically, the study sampled 34 members of Boards of Governors out of a population of 60, 3 head teachers out of 6, and 132 teachers from a total of 234.

Sampling techniques

The study employed a combination of purposive sampling and stratified sampling techniques to select respondents

from the target population of public secondary schools in Kajara County, Ntungamo District.

Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select Board of Governors members and head teachers. This technique allowed the researcher to deliberately select individuals based on their positions, responsibilities, and knowledge relevant to the study. The selection focused on participants who were directly involved in school management and decision-making processes and who could provide valuable insights into factors affecting teacher motivation and performance. A total of 34 Board of Governors members out of 60 and 3 head teachers out of 6 were selected using this method.

Stratified sampling

For teachers, the study employed stratified sampling. This technique ensured that the sample was representative of the diverse characteristics within the teacher population. Teachers were stratified based on variables such as gender, subject taught, and years of teaching experience to achieve balanced representation across different sub-groups. From a total of 234 teachers, a stratified random sample of 132 was drawn to ensure inclusivity and reduce sampling bias.

Data collection methods

This study utilized three main data collection methods: questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review. The use of multiple methods enabled triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity, reliability, and depth of the data collected on teacher motivation and performance in public secondary schools in Kajara County, Ntungamo District.

Questionnaire method

A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of teachers. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and Likert-scale items, designed to collect quantitative data on key variables such as financial incentives, professional development, autonomy, and performance. This method was appropriate for reaching a larger number of respondents within a short period and allowed for standardized data collection suitable for statistical analysis. The questionnaire was self-administered, and its design was informed by the study objectives and reviewed literature.

Interview method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected head teachers and members of Boards of Governors. This qualitative method enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth information, clarify issues raised in the questionnaires, and explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding teacher motivation and performance.

Documentary review

The study also employed a documentary review to collect secondary data from existing records and reports. Documents reviewed included school performance reports, teacher appraisal forms, attendance registers, government policy documents, and staff development records. This method provided contextual and historical information to supplement the primary data and helped validate or contrast findings from the questionnaires and interviews.

Data collection instruments

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was the primary instrument for collecting quantitative data from teachers. It was structured and divided into sections corresponding to the key variables of the study, including financial incentives and performance. The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items to allow for statistical analysis and facilitate the measurement of attitudes, perceptions, and levels of agreement. The instrument was pre-tested to ensure clarity, reliability, and appropriateness of the items.

Interview guide

A semi-structured interview guide was developed for use with head teachers and members of Boards of Governors. This instrument contained open-ended questions designed to gather qualitative data on participants' views, experiences, and insights regarding teacher motivation and performance in their schools. The flexible nature of the guide allowed the interviewer to probe responses for deeper understanding and explore emerging themes during the conversation. The interview guide was aligned with the study objectives to ensure consistency in data collection.

Document review checklist

A document review checklist was used to systematically collect secondary data from relevant school and institutional documents. These included teacher attendance records, performance appraisal reports, staff development records, school performance reports, and education policy documents.

Validity and reliability of the instruments

Validity of instruments

https://doi.org/10.51168/q49wsa86
Original Article

The study used the expert judgment method, where an expert in education research was contacted and judged the questionnaire. During his judgment, 19 questions out of 20 were found correct, and the one remaining question was corrected with his guidance, making the whole research instrument valid. After, the Content Validity Index was determined by dividing the relevant questions by the total number of questions in the research instrument (CVI= n/N). Therefore, a Content Validity Index of 0.95 was obtained. This was compared with 0.7 as suggested by Amin (2009), and declared that the research instruments were good to use in collecting data for the study.

Reliability of instruments

The study employed the test-retest method and the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient to determine how consistent the research Instruments were. Instruments were first issued to 3 respondents who were out of this study (school outside this study). After one week, the same respondents were issued the same questions. Relative values of the answers provided in the first and second tests were fed into SPSS, and a Cronbach's Coefficient value of 0.85 was obtained. This was greater than 0.70 as suggested by Kothari (2006).

Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data was obtained primarily through structured questionnaires administered to teachers. Once collected, the data was coded, entered, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 25. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize responses and present the general trends of teacher motivation and performance. Additionally, inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation coefficient, were used to test the relationships between key variables such as financial incentives, professional development, teacher autonomy, and performance. The results were presented using tables, charts, and graphs to enhance clarity and interpretation.

Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with head teachers and members of Boards of Governors, as well as through documentary review. The interview responses were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic content analysis. This process involved reading through the transcripts, identifying key themes and patterns, coding the data, and organizing it into categories

Ethical approval

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was sought from the relevant authorities, including the University Ethics Committee and the Ntungamo District Education Office. Authorization letters were obtained to gain access to the selected schools and to conduct the study in accordance with institutional and governmental guidelines.
Responsible Reporting: The researcher ensured that data were reported truthfully and objectively. No fabrication, misrepresentation, or manipulation of results was allowed. All sources used in the study were properly acknowledged to maintain academic integrity and avoid plagiarism.

Informed consent

All participants were provided with clear information about the purpose, scope, and objectives of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and each respondent was asked to provide written informed consent before taking part in the study. They were assured that they had the right to withdraw at any time without facing any negative consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity

The study ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. Personal identifiers such as names, titles, or contact information were not included in the data analysis or final report. Data collected was securely stored and accessed only by the researcher for the purposes of this study. Findings were reported in a manner that did not reveal the identity of individuals or institutions.

Privacy and respect for participants

The research was conducted with full respect for participants' privacy and dignity. Interviews were scheduled at convenient times and conducted in settings that ensured privacy. The questions asked were professional and relevant to the research objectives, avoiding any sensitive or intrusive content.

Results

Response rate

The response rate was determined using the formula;

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

https://doi.org/10.51168/q49wsa86

Table 3: Response rate of the study

Respondents	Interviews Scheduled and Questionnaires to be Issued	Interviews Conducted and Questionnaires Issued	Response Rate (%)
Board of Governors	34	30	88.2%
Head Teachers	3	3	100%
Teachers	132	117	88.6%
Total	169	150	88.8%

Source: Primary data (2025)

Table 3 shows that, the study targeted a total of 169 respondents, comprising members of the Board of Governors, Head Teachers, and Teachers from selected public secondary schools in Kajara County, Ntungamo District. Out of the total number of interviews scheduled and questionnaires issued, 150 were successfully conducted and returned, representing an overall response rate of 88.8%. This response rate is considered highly satisfactory for social science research, as it exceeds the commonly accepted minimum threshold of 70%, ensuring that the data collected are both reliable and representative.

As indicated, a total of 34 Board of Governors were expected to participate in the study, and 30 successfully responded, representing a response rate of 88.2%. This high level of participation demonstrates a strong commitment among school management bodies to issues concerning teacher motivation and performance. Their responses provided valuable insights into institutional policies, management practices, and governance structures that influence teacher motivation.

All 3 Head Teachers (100%) who were targeted for interviews participated in the study. This complete response rate reflects their central role in school administration and their willingness to provide information on the strategies used to enhance teacher performance and motivation. The full participation of head teachers also enriched the data, especially regarding administrative practices, leadership styles, and the challenges they face in motivating teachers within public secondary schools.

Among the 132 teachers targeted, 117 responded, giving a response rate of 88.6%. This strong participation from teachers indicates a high level of interest and engagement in the study topic. Teachers' responses were crucial because they are directly affected by motivational factors such as remuneration, working conditions, recognition, and professional development opportunities. Their feedback provided first-hand information on how these factors influence their performance in classroom instruction and other professional responsibilities.

Overall, the high response rate of 88.8% suggests that the findings of this study are dependable and can be generalized to other public secondary schools within Kajara County, Ntungamo District. It also implies that the respondents were cooperative and recognized the importance of the study in improving teacher motivation and performance in their schools.

Socio-Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 4: Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 150)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	85	56.7
	Female	65	43.3
Total		150	100
Age (Years)	20 – 29	22	14.7
	30 – 39	54	36.0
	40 – 49	46	30.7
	50 and above	28	18.6
Total		150	100
Marital Status	Single	41	27.3
	Married	94	62.7
	Divorced/Separated	10	6.7
	Widowed	5	3.3
Total		150	100
Educational Qualification	Diploma in Education	49	32.7
	Bachelor's Degree	79	52.7
	Master's Degree	17	11.3

	Other (e.g., Certificate, PGDE)	5	3.3
Total		150	100
Years of Service	Less than 5 years	28	18.7
	5–10 years	46	30.7
	11–15 years	39	26.0
	Above 15 years	37	24.6
Total		150	100

Source: *Primary data (2025)*

The results in table 4 show that the study involved 150 respondents from selected public secondary schools in Kajara County, Ntungamo District. The findings reveal that the majority of the respondents (56.7%) were male, while 43.3% were female, suggesting a slight gender imbalance in favor of males within the teaching workforce in the study area.

In terms of age distribution, most respondents (36.0%) were aged between 30 and 39 years, followed by those aged 40–49 years (30.7%). This implies that the majority of teachers are in their mid-career stage, characterized by substantial experience and professional stability. Only 14.7% of the respondents were below 30 years, indicating that fewer young teachers are joining public secondary schools.

Regarding marital status, 62.7% of the respondents were married, while 27.3% were single. A small percentage were divorced/separated (6.7%) or widowed (3.3%). This suggests that most teachers in Kajara County have family responsibilities, which may influence their motivation and work performance.

With respect to educational qualifications, over half of the respondents (52.7%) possessed a Bachelor's Degree, followed by 32.7% with a Diploma in Education, while 11.3% had attained a Master's Degree. A small proportion (3.3%) held other qualifications such as a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). This indicates that the teaching staff in the sampled schools are generally well-qualified, reflecting the Ministry of Education and Sports' emphasis on professionalism and competence in teaching.

As for years of service, 30.7% of the respondents had served between 5–10 years, 26.0% between 11–15 years, and 24.6% had worked for over 15 years, while 18.7% had less than 5 years of experience. This distribution shows that a majority of the teachers have considerable experience, which may contribute positively to their performance, although prolonged service without sufficient motivation might lead to burnout.

Financial incentives of teachers in public secondary schools in Kajara County.

Descriptive Findings on Financial Incentives of Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Kajara County.

The study sought to assess the extent to which teachers agreed or disagreed with statements related to financial motivation, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The results reveal significant disparities and irregularities in the provision of financial incentives to teachers in public secondary schools.

Table 5: Financial incentives of teachers in public secondary schools in Kajara County (N = 150)

Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Mean	Std. Dev.
I receive my monthly salary	10	25	20	60	35	3.78	1.14
The salary I earn is sufficient to meet my basic needs and expenses	65	52	20	10	3	2.01	1.02
There is timely payment of salaries for teachers	48	57	18	20	7	2.34	1.10
Teachers are given salary advance	80	44	16	8	2	1.88	0.95
I receive transport allowances	96	38	10	4	2	1.72	0.88
I receive housing allowance	102	34	8	4	2	1.66	0.83
Salary increments are based on performance and qualifications	75	47	16	10	2	1.94	0.92
Financial incentives are distributed fairly among staff	68	52	15	12	3	2.00	0.97
There are bonuses or rewards for the outstanding performance of teachers	88	45	10	6	1	1.74	0.84
Teachers receive fringe benefits	79	49	14	6	2	1.86	0.89
Teachers receive financial support through their SACCO	33	42	27	35	13	2.88	1.25
Additional responsibilities (class teacher, head of department) come with financial compensation	64	48	15	17	6	2.12	1.07

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Original Article

Overall Mean and Std. Dev.						2.24	1.00

Source: Primary data (2025).

Table 5 shows that, most respondents agreed that they receive their monthly salary (Mean = 3.78, Std. Dev. = 1.14). This finding suggests that although teachers are regularly paid, the satisfaction associated with this payment may not necessarily reflect adequacy or timeliness. However, a majority of respondents disagreed with the statement that "the salary earned is sufficient to meet basic needs and expenses" (Mean = 2.01, Std. Dev. = 1.02). This implies that while salaries are received, they are largely perceived as inadequate for sustaining decent living standards, which may adversely affect teachers' motivation and performance.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that most teachers disagreed that salaries are paid on time (Mean = 2.34, Std. Dev. = 1.10). This indicates that there are instances of delayed salary payments, which may cause financial stress among teachers and negatively impact their work morale. Similarly, respondents strongly disagreed that teachers are given salary advances (Mean = 1.88, Std. Dev. = 0.95), suggesting limited access to emergency financial support mechanisms within the public-school system.

With respect to allowances, the results show that the majority of respondents strongly disagreed with statements regarding the receipt of transport allowances (Mean = 1.72, Std. Dev. = 0.88) and housing allowances (Mean = 1.66, Std. Dev. = 0.83). This indicates that most teachers do not receive any form of allowance to cater for their transportation or accommodation needs. The absence of such allowances is likely to contribute to financial strain, especially for teachers who commute long distances or rent housing near their schools.

The study also found that salary increments based on performance and qualifications are rare (Mean = 1.94, Std. Dev. = 0.92). This demonstrates that the remuneration system in public secondary schools does not adequately reward merit or additional qualifications, which may discourage professional growth and effort among teachers. Likewise, respondents disagreed that financial incentives are distributed fairly among staff (Mean = 2.00, Std. Dev. = 0.97), indicating a perceived lack of transparency and equity in the allocation of financial benefits.

Moreover, most teachers strongly disagreed that there are bonuses or rewards for outstanding performance (Mean = 1.74, Std. Dev. = 0.84) and that they receive fringe benefits (Mean = 1.86, Std. Dev. = 0.89). This suggests that performance-based incentives and supplementary benefits such as medical cover, gratuities, or travel allowances are either non-existent or irregularly provided in public secondary schools.

Interestingly, a slightly higher level of agreement was noted regarding financial support through teachers' SACCOs (Mean = 2.88, Std. Dev. = 1.25). This implies that some teachers rely on cooperative societies for financial assistance, indicating that motivation through external financial support structures is more common than direct government-based incentives. However, this form of financial support is not uniform and depends on individual membership and contribution to such SACCOs.

Regarding financial compensation for additional responsibilities, such as being a class teacher or head of department, most respondents disagreed (Mean = 2.12, Std. Dev. = 1.07). This finding reveals that teachers who take on extra administrative or instructional roles often do not receive corresponding financial rewards, which may lead to demotivation or reluctance to assume additional duties.

The overall mean of 2.24 and a standard deviation of 1.00 indicate a general tendency towards disagreement with most statements related to financial incentives. This suggests that the financial motivation of teachers in Kajara County is inadequate, inconsistent, and unsatisfactory. The high standard deviations observed across several items further reflect variability in teachers' experiences and perceptions, implying that while some teachers might receive certain financial benefits, the majority do not.

Qualitative findings on financial incentives of teachers in public secondary schools in Kajara County

During the Interview, one of the selected heat teachers said *"Our teachers receive their monthly salaries, but the problem is that the money is often delayed and, to be honest, it is not enough to meet their basic needs. You find that some teachers have to borrow from SACCOs or take loans just to survive until the next payment. The lack of allowances such as transport or housing makes the situation even worse, especially for those who travel long distances. When salaries are delayed, teachers become demoralized, and this affects their commitment in class."*

Another Head Teacher said *"Financial motivation among teachers here is generally very low. There are no bonuses or rewards for good performance, and salary increments are not based on qualifications or effort. A teacher can upgrade from a diploma to a degree, but their pay remains the same for years. This discourages many from pursuing further studies. Also, when teachers take on additional roles like being heads of departments, they do so voluntarily—without any extra pay. It becomes hard to push staff to perform beyond the minimum when the financial system doesn't recognize their effort."*

Another Head Teacher also said *"We try to appreciate our teachers through non-monetary means such as recognition*

during assemblies or end-of-year gatherings, but in reality, what they need most is financial stability. The government salary structure does not provide room for incentives at the school level, so even when we want to motivate teachers financially, we are limited. Occasionally, some support comes through the teachers' SACCOs, but not everyone benefits equally. The inconsistency in financial benefits makes it difficult to maintain high morale."

Chairman Board of Governors for a selected secondary school said *"As a Board, we are aware of the financial challenges facing teachers. Unfortunately, our hands are tied because the school budget largely depends on government allocations, which are already minimal. We have raised the issue of allowances several times in our meetings, but since most funds go towards operational expenses, there is little left for teacher incentives. We believe that if teachers were given even small performance-based rewards, their morale would greatly improve."*
Another Board Member added *"We have observed that many teachers struggle financially despite being employed by the government. Some have to engage in side businesses to make ends meet. There are no housing or transport allowances, and salaries are sometimes delayed. This affects attendance and concentration because teachers are worried about their finances. As a Board, we think the Ministry should consider reviewing the salary structure and introducing clear incentive schemes to encourage productivity and retain good teachers."*

Another member of Board of Governors said *"The lack of financial motivation is a real issue. Teachers perform a lot of duties beyond teaching, like handling administrative work, coordinating clubs, or mentoring students but they receive no extra compensation. It's demoralizing. Even the small tokens of appreciation we sometimes suggest as a Board are hard to sustain because of funding limitations. We rely on SACCOs or PTA contributions at times, but these are not consistent. A structured and fair financial incentive system would make a big difference in teacher performance."*

Table 6: Thematic analysis of interview responses on financial incentives for teachers in Kajara County, Ntungamo District

Theme	Sample Interview Quotes	Interpretation / Analysis
Inadequate and Irregular Salaries	*"Teachers receive their monthly salaries, but the money is often delayed, and it is not enough to meet their basic needs."* (Head Teacher 1); *"Some teachers have to borrow from SACCOs or take loans just to survive until the next payment."* (Head Teacher)	Salaries are viewed as insufficient and frequently delayed, leading to financial stress. Irregular payment schedules undermine teachers' financial security and morale.
Absence of Allowances (Transport and Housing)	*"There are no housing or transport allowances, and salaries are sometimes delayed. This affects attendance and concentration because teachers are worried about their finances."* (Board of Governors Member) *"The lack of allowances makes the situation even worse, especially for those who travel long distances."* (Head teacher 1)	Teachers receive no supplementary allowances to support commuting or accommodation. This creates financial strain, especially for those teaching far from home.
Lack of Performance-Based Incentives and Recognition	*"There are no bonuses or rewards for good performance, and salary increments are not based on qualifications or effort."* (Head teacher 2) *"Teachers perform extra duties but receive no compensation. It's demoralizing."* (BOG3)	The remuneration system does not reward merit, effort, or additional qualifications. This reduces motivation and discourages professional development among teachers.
Limited Access to Financial Support Mechanisms	*"Occasionally, some support comes through teachers' SACCOs, but not everyone benefits equally."* (HT3) *"We rely on SACCOs or PTA contributions at times, but these are not consistent."* (BOG3)	SACCOs serve as an alternative financial support source, but access depends on individual membership and contributions. Support is inconsistent and not institutionalized.
Budgetary Constraints and Systemic Limitations	*"Our hands are tied because the school budget largely depends on government allocations."* (BOG1) *"The government salary structure does not provide room for incentives at the school level."* (HT3)	Both head teachers and Boards recognize that inadequate funding and centralized salary control limit their ability to offer incentives or manage timely payments.
Negative Impact on Teacher	*"When salaries are delayed, teachers become demoralized, and this affects their commitment in class."*	Financial challenges are directly linked to low morale, decreased classroom effectiveness, and

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Motivation and Performance	(HT1) *"Low financial motivation contributes to absenteeism and reduced effort."* (BOG2)	reluctance to take on additional responsibilities.

Source: *Primary data (2025).*

The qualitative evidence from head teachers and Board of Governors members strongly supports the quantitative results. Financial incentives for teachers in Kajara County are inadequate, inconsistent, and poorly managed. The lack of allowances, bonuses, and performance-based rewards, coupled with salary delays, creates significant demotivation. Although SACCOs offer limited relief, systemic financial constraints continue to hinder effective teacher motivation and performance.

Performance of Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Kajara County

Descriptive findings on performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Kajara County

Table 7: Teachers' Perceptions of Their Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kajara County (N = 150)

Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Mean	Std. Dev.
I prepare well-organized and detailed lesson plans for my classes.	65	55	20	8	2	2.16	1.02
I consistently use a variety of teaching methods to meet students' learning needs.	60	55	25	8	2	2.24	1.05
I complete the syllabus within the allocated academic period.	70	50	20	8	2	2.14	1.01
I regularly assess students through tests, assignments, and classwork.	55	60	25	8	2	2.22	1.03
I provide timely and constructive feedback to students on their performance.	60	55	20	10	5	2.30	1.07
I maintain accurate and up-to-date student records.	55	60	20	10	5	2.32	1.04
I report to school and class on time consistently.	50	60	25	10	5	2.38	1.06
I actively participate in school co-curricular activities.	70	50	20	8	2	2.14	0.99
I engage learners in active discussions during lessons.	60	55	25	8	2	2.22	1.01
I collaborate effectively with other teachers in professional activities.	65	50	25	8	2	2.20	1.00
I attend and contribute meaningfully to staff meetings and workshops.	55	60	20	10	5	2.32	1.05
I demonstrate a positive attitude towards my teaching responsibilities.	60	55	20	10	5	2.26	1.04
I follow up on students who are at risk of failing or dropping out.	65	55	20	8	2	2.16	0.98
I maintain discipline and order in the classroom effectively.	55	60	20	10	5	2.32	1.03
My teaching contributes to improved student academic performance.	60	55	20	10	5	2.26	1.01
Overall Mean						2.25	1.03

Source: Primary data (2025).

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics on teachers' perceptions of their performance in public secondary schools in Kajara County. The results reveal that the overall mean of 2.25 (SD = 1.03) indicates a general tendency toward disagreement with most of the statements measuring teacher performance. This suggests that teachers' performance levels in key professional areas such as lesson preparation, instructional delivery, assessment, classroom management, and participation in school activities are generally low.

The data show that most teachers disagreed with the statement that they prepare well-organized and detailed lesson plans for their classes (Mean = 2.16, SD = 1.02). This finding implies that lesson preparation is often inadequate, possibly due to high workloads, limited instructional support, or low motivation. Similarly, teachers disagreed with the statement that they consistently use a variety of teaching methods to meet students' learning needs (Mean = 2.24, SD = 1.05), suggesting that the use of diverse and learner-centered approaches is minimal. This may reflect a lack of professional development opportunities and limited autonomy to innovate in teaching, as revealed in earlier sections of this study.

Furthermore, a large proportion of teachers reported that they do not complete the syllabus within the allocated academic period (Mean = 2.14, SD = 1.01). This implies that instructional time is either poorly utilized or constrained by absenteeism, delayed salary payments, or inadequate teaching materials. The limited use of continuous assessment is also evident from the mean score of 2.22 (SD = 1.03) for the statement "I regularly assess students through tests, assignments, and classwork." Similarly, the mean score of 2.30 (SD = 1.07) for "I provide timely and constructive feedback to students on their performance" indicates that feedback practices are inconsistent and often delayed, which may hinder student progress and learning outcomes.

Regarding administrative and record-keeping responsibilities, teachers reported low performance levels. The statement "I maintain accurate and up-to-date student records" recorded a mean of 2.32 (SD = 1.04), indicating that documentation of students' academic progress and attendance is irregular. Likewise, punctuality and time management among teachers appeared weak, with a mean of 2.38 (SD = 1.06) for the statement "I report to school and class on time consistently." This could be linked to low morale arising from irregular salary payments and limited supervision mechanisms.

The findings also show limited engagement in co-curricular and collaborative activities. The statement "I actively participate in school co-curricular activities" had a mean of 2.14 (SD = 0.99), suggesting that most teachers are less involved in extracurricular programs, possibly due to lack of incentives or overemphasis on academic tasks. Similarly, the statement "I collaborate effectively with other teachers in professional activities" yielded a mean of 2.20 (SD = 1.00), implying weak teamwork and minimal peer collaboration. This lack of collegial engagement may stem from inadequate professional development structures and limited administrative encouragement.

With regard to classroom interaction, most teachers disagreed that they engage learners in active discussions during lessons (Mean = 2.22, SD = 1.01). This finding suggests that teacher-centered approaches dominate classroom instruction, reducing opportunities for participatory and interactive learning. Moreover, the mean of 2.16 (SD = 0.98) for the statement "I follow up on students who are at risk of failing or dropping out" indicates that individualized learner support is rarely practiced, which may contribute to poor retention and low academic achievement.

Teachers also reported challenges in maintaining discipline and order in the classroom, with a mean of 2.32 (SD = 1.03). This reflects that effective classroom management is constrained, possibly by large class sizes, inadequate administrative support, or low teacher authority. The statement "I demonstrate a positive attitude towards my teaching responsibilities" received a mean of 2.26 (SD = 1.04), implying that low motivation and job dissatisfaction are affecting teachers' enthusiasm and commitment to their roles.

Finally, the finding that "My teaching contributes to improved student academic performance" had a mean of 2.26 (SD = 1.01) further underscores the perceived decline in teaching effectiveness. The overall low mean scores across all items suggest that teacher performance in Kajara County's public secondary schools is suboptimal, with teachers struggling to meet professional standards of preparation, instruction, assessment, and engagement.

These findings imply that the low teacher performance observed may be a direct consequence of the factors identified in earlier sections of this study, including inadequate financial incentives, limited opportunities for professional growth, and restricted autonomy. Together, these challenges appear to have undermined teachers' motivation, efficiency, and dedication to classroom instruction and learner support. The relatively high standard deviations across items (ranging around 1.00) indicate variability in performance levels, suggesting that while a few teachers remain committed and perform well, the majority face difficulties in sustaining professional effectiveness under the prevailing conditions.

Qualitative Findings on Teacher Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kajara County.

To supplement the quantitative data, interviews were conducted with two head teachers and one member of the Board of Governors to obtain deeper insights into the factors influencing teacher performance in public secondary schools in Kajara County. The qualitative findings revealed that the majority of teachers exhibit low performance levels, which are attributed to demotivation, limited professional support, financial challenges, and poor working conditions. The responses presented below illustrate these recurring themes.

Head Teacher 1 said "*In recent years, I have observed a general decline in teachers' commitment and classroom preparation. Many teachers come to class with very brief notes instead of detailed lesson plans, and they rarely use new teaching methods. Some of them attribute this to heavy workloads, delayed salaries, and lack of incentives. Because of these challenges, most teachers just do the minimum*

required to cover the syllabus, and in some cases, they fail to complete it on time. Continuous assessments are also irregular because teachers are not adequately supervised or motivated to put in extra effort."

Head Teacher 2 added *"Our teachers are hardworking, but they are working under difficult conditions. Most of them are overwhelmed by large class sizes and multiple administrative responsibilities. Some even teach in more than one school to supplement their income. This makes it hard for them to prepare adequately, mark assignments regularly, or follow up on weak students. In addition, because of the limited professional development programs, they tend to rely on the same traditional methods they learned long ago. The result is that teaching becomes repetitive and less effective."*

Board of Governors Member also said *"As a board, we have discussed teacher performance several times. The truth is that many teachers lack motivation because their salaries are low and often delayed. This has affected their morale and commitment to teaching. You find that teachers come late to school, spend less time on lesson preparation, and show limited interest in co-curricular activities. Some are present physically but not fully engaged in their work. We also realized that supervision and performance appraisal systems are not strong enough to hold teachers accountable or recognize the few who perform well."*

Table 8: Themes from qualitative findings on teacher performance in Kajara County

Theme	Description	Illustrative Evidence
Inadequate Lesson Preparation and Delivery	Teachers often lack well-organized lesson plans and use limited instructional strategies.	Head Teacher 1 noted that "teachers come to class with very brief notes instead of detailed lesson plans."
Low Motivation and Morale	Poor and delayed salaries, lack of incentives, and limited recognition have demotivated teachers.	The BOG member observed that "many teachers lack motivation because their salaries are low and often delayed."
High Workload and Multiple Responsibilities	Heavy teaching loads and administrative duties hinder effective preparation and individualized attention to students.	Head Teacher 2 stated that "most of them are overwhelmed by large class sizes and multiple administrative responsibilities."
Limited Professional Development	Teachers rarely attend refresher courses or workshops, leading to reliance on outdated teaching methods.	Head Teacher 2 remarked that teachers "tend to rely on the same traditional methods they learned long ago."
Weak Supervision and Accountability	Inadequate monitoring mechanisms contribute to laxity and reduced professional commitment.	The BOG member highlighted that "supervision and performance appraisal systems are not strong enough."
Decline in Student Outcomes	Reduced teaching effort and poor engagement contribute to weak academic performance.	Both head teachers noted that "teachers fail to complete the syllabus" and "teaching becomes less effective."

Overall, the qualitative evidence confirms that the low teacher performance observed in Kajara County stems from a combination of systemic, administrative, and motivational challenges. Teachers operate under conditions of inadequate support, poor remuneration, and limited growth opportunities, which diminish their enthusiasm and productivity. The lack of regular supervision and professional development further perpetuates mediocrity and complacency, ultimately affecting the quality of instruction and student achievement.

The findings thus point to an urgent need for improved teacher motivation systems, stronger supervision mechanisms, and increased professional support to enhance teacher performance and overall educational outcomes in Kajara County.

Documentary findings on Performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Kajara County

To complement the questionnaire and interview data, documentary analysis was conducted in selected public secondary schools across Kajara County. The reviewed documents included teachers' lesson plans and schemes of work, staff attendance registers, students' assessment records, supervision reports, and Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) results reports for the past three academic years (2022–2024). The purpose of this review was to triangulate the data and provide objective evidence of teachers' actual performance levels.

The documentary findings revealed several consistent trends that corroborate the quantitative and qualitative data, indicating generally low and inconsistent teacher performance in the majority of schools reviewed.

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Preparation and Documentation of Lesson Plans and Schemes of Work: The review of lesson plans and schemes of work indicated significant weaknesses in teachers' instructional preparation. While most schools required teachers to submit schemes of work at the beginning of each term, several records revealed delays and incomplete submissions. In some schools, lesson plans were either missing or very brief, lacking key elements such as specific learning objectives, teaching aids, and assessment methods. In two schools, internal inspection reports explicitly stated that "teachers often repeat the same lesson plans from previous years without necessary updates to align with current syllabus requirements." In another school, an academic department file contained only two lesson plans for the entire term, suggesting minimal preparation. These findings imply that instructional planning is often treated as a routine compliance task rather than a genuine pedagogical process, thereby undermining the quality of teaching and learning.

Staff Attendance and Time Management: The staff attendance registers examined across several schools revealed a consistent pattern of teacher absenteeism and lateness. In some schools, teachers were absent for several consecutive days without official leave or formal communication. On average, about one-third of the teachers in the sampled schools had irregular attendance records.

Head teachers' remarks in the attendance registers frequently cited lateness, especially for morning lessons. For example, one head teacher noted, "Most teachers report late, especially on Mondays and Fridays, which affects syllabus coverage and student discipline." Another register showed repeated annotations such as "absent without permission" or "arrived after 9:00 a.m." This irregularity in attendance demonstrates low professional commitment and weak accountability mechanisms in staff supervision.

Supervision and Performance Appraisal Reports: Supervision reports obtained from head teachers and district inspectors highlighted gaps in instructional delivery and classroom management. Inspectors noted that in many observed lessons, teachers relied heavily on dictation and chalk-and-talk methods, with minimal student participation. Some teachers reportedly avoided using teaching aids or practical demonstrations even for subjects that require them, such as sciences and geography.
Performance appraisal forms for teachers also showed generally average or below-average ratings across core performance indicators such as lesson preparation, classroom control, assessment of learners, and innovation in teaching. In some schools, appraisal reports had not been updated for over a year, suggesting limited follow-up on teacher performance. These gaps indicate that supervision and appraisal systems are weak and inconsistently implemented, reducing the opportunity for constructive feedback and professional improvement.

Students' Assessment Records and Feedback Practices: A review of students' continuous assessment records revealed inconsistencies in test administration and record-keeping. Some teachers maintained well-documented mark sheets, while others had incomplete or missing records. In several schools, student exercise books showed very few marked assignments, with minimal teacher comments or feedback.
In one school, the end-of-term report books contained blank spaces for certain subjects, indicating that continuous assessment marks had not been submitted on time. Another school's internal audit report stated that "delayed marking and poor record management have led to irregular updating of student progress reports." This suggests that many teachers do not provide timely feedback to learners, a practice that negatively affects student motivation and learning outcomes.

Participation in Co-curricular and school-based activities:

Records of participation in co-curricular activities such as sports, music, and debating revealed low teacher involvement. Activity registers indicated that only a small number of teachers consistently supervised or supported student clubs and teams. In several schools, the same few teachers were responsible for organizing all co-curricular activities throughout the year, while the majority remained uninvolved.
Minutes from staff meetings showed recurring complaints about "teacher apathy towards extracurricular programs." The limited engagement of teachers in holistic school activities suggests low levels of motivation and institutional commitment beyond routine classroom teaching.

Student academic achievement records (2022–2024): An analysis of UCE examination results from 2022 to 2024 across five sampled schools showed stagnant or declining academic performance. The proportion of candidates attaining Division I and II declined steadily over the three years, while the percentage of students in Divisions III and IV increased. In one large school, the number of students passing in Division I dropped from 45 in 2022 to only 28 in 2024, despite stable enrolment.
School performance reports attributed this decline primarily to incomplete syllabus coverage, irregular teaching, and inadequate follow-up on weak students. Some head teachers also cited absenteeism and insufficient preparation as major obstacles to effective teaching. These findings suggest that low teacher performance directly translates into poor student outcomes.

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Administrative correspondence and meeting minutes: Minutes of departmental and staff meetings further highlighted concerns about teacher performance. Discussions frequently centered around lateness, missed lessons, poor record submission, and unmarked assignments. In several instances, head teachers issued written warnings or internal memos urging teachers to improve punctuality and syllabus coverage. However, follow-up actions were often limited, and the same issues reappeared in subsequent meetings.

One staff meeting minute from 2024 noted: "Despite several reminders, some teachers continue to report late and fail to complete required teaching records. The administration will consider disciplinary action if no improvement is observed." This pattern reflects a persistent challenge in enforcing accountability among teaching staff.

Table 9: Summary of documentary findings on teacher performance in Kajara County

Area Reviewed	Key Findings	Implication
Lesson Planning and Schemes of Work	Incomplete, outdated, or missing lesson plans; delayed submission of schemes of work.	Poor instructional preparation reduces teaching effectiveness.
Teacher Attendance	Frequent lateness and absenteeism are recorded in registers.	Weak commitment and poor time management affect syllabus coverage.
Supervision and Appraisal	Limited follow-up; outdated or incomplete appraisal reports.	Weak accountability and minimal professional feedback.
Student Assessment	Irregular tests and delayed marking; incomplete record books.	Reduced feedback and inconsistent learner evaluation.
Co-Curricular Participation	Low teacher involvement in extracurricular activities.	Limited holistic development and poor staff engagement.
Student Academic Performance	Declining UCE results over three years.	Evidence of reduced instructional quality and teacher productivity.
Administrative Communication	Repeated warnings and unresolved performance issues in meeting minutes.	Poor enforcement of administrative control and follow-up.

Source: Secondary Data (2025).

Correlation findings of the study

To examine the relationship between financial incentives, professional growth opportunities, autonomy, and the performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Kajara County, a Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was conducted. The results, reveal statistically significant positive correlations between each of the independent variables and teacher performance at the 0.01 significance level (2-tailed). This implies that improvements in financial incentives, professional development, and teacher autonomy are all associated with better teacher performance within the study area.

Table 10: Correlation between financial incentives, professional growth opportunities, autonomy and performance of teachers in Kajara County

Variable	Pearson Correlation with Performance of Teachers	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Financial incentives	0.786 *	0.000	150

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Primary data (2025).

The results indicate a strong positive correlation between financial incentives and teacher performance ($r = 0.786$, $p < 0.01$). This means that as the adequacy, consistency, and fairness of financial incentives improve, the performance of teachers also increases significantly.

This finding suggests that teachers who receive regular and adequate salaries, allowances, bonuses, and other forms of financial motivation are more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment, punctuality, and instructional effectiveness. It further implies that poor remuneration and irregular payment as earlier revealed in the descriptive and qualitative analyses contribute substantially to low morale and diminished performance among teachers in Kajara County. Therefore, financial incentives emerge as the most influential factor affecting teacher performance in the study, underscoring the central role of economic motivation in sustaining productivity and accountability among educators.

Regression Analysis of Findings.

To examine the predictive effect of financial incentives on the performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Kajara County, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The regression model was specified as follows

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$$\text{Teacher Performance} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Financial Incentives}) + \beta_2(\text{Professional Growth}) + \beta_3(\text{Autonomy}) + \epsilon$$

Where:

- β_0 = constant term,
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = regression coefficients,
- ϵ = error term.

Table 11: Model summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.812	0.659	0.652	0.612

Source: Primary data (2025)

The model summary shows that the combined effect of financial incentives, professional growth opportunities, and autonomy explains approximately 65.9% of the variance in teacher performance ($R^2 = 0.659$). The adjusted R^2 of 0.652 indicates that the model remains robust after accounting for the number of predictors. The relatively small standard error of 0.612 suggests that the predicted values of teacher performance are close to the observed values.

Table 12: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	145.32	3	48.44	129.67	0.000
Residual	74.73	146	0.512		
Total	220.05	149			

Source: Primary data (2025)

The ANOVA results indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 129.67$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that the predictors collectively have a meaningful influence on teacher performance in Kajara County.

Table 13: Regression coefficients

Predictor Variable	B (Unstandardized Coefficient)	Std. Error	Beta (Standardized Coefficient)	t	Sig.
Constant	0.312	0.152	—	2.05	0.042
Financial Incentives	0.572	0.068	0.624	8.41	0.000

Source: Primary data (2025).

Table 13 shows that financial incentives have a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance ($\beta = 0.572$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that for every one-unit increase in financial incentives, teacher performance is predicted to increase by 0.572 units, holding other variables constant. Among the three predictors, financial incentives have the strongest impact, confirming earlier correlation findings.

Discussion of key findings

Financial incentives and teacher performance

The study findings revealed a strong positive correlation between financial incentives and teacher performance ($r = 0.786$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that teachers in Kajara County are highly responsive to financial motivation. This aligns closely with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which classifies remuneration as a hygiene factor-its absence generates dissatisfaction and hinders performance, whereas adequate financial rewards help maintain morale and commitment (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Consistent with the literature, the study confirms that inadequate and irregular salaries, absence of performance-based bonuses, and limited fringe benefits demotivate teachers. As Baguma (2010) observed, financial constraints in government-aided schools negatively affect teacher morale and willingness to exert additional effort in teaching-related tasks. Similarly, Mugisha (2020) highlights that low financial incentives lead teachers to seek alternative income sources, such as private tutoring, which can detract from their instructional responsibilities.

The findings suggest that teachers in Kajara County often experience similar challenges. Descriptive and qualitative data indicated low engagement in lesson preparation, reduced participation in professional activities, and absenteeism—all consistent with the literature linking insufficient financial motivation to poor teacher performance. Uko et al. (2015) and Tumwesigye (2014) further emphasize that even modest but timely financial

incentives—such as allowances, transport refunds, or small bonuses-can significantly enhance teacher motivation, attendance, and commitment. This reinforces the study's conclusion that financial incentives are not only critical for teacher well-being but are also instrumental in driving instructional effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Moreover, the rural context of Kajara County exacerbates financial challenges due to higher transportation and living costs, as noted in previous studies (UNEB, 2022). This aligns with the study's findings, where teachers reported feeling undercompensated relative to the demands of their work environment, leading to reduced professional engagement.

In summary, the study corroborates the literature by showing that financial incentives are the most influential factor affecting teacher performance in Kajara County. Addressing this issue could lead to improved attendance, greater instructional effort, and enhanced student achievement, highlighting the need for policy interventions targeting teacher remuneration.

Conclusion

Financial incentives are the most significant determinant of teacher performance in public secondary schools in Kajara County. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between financial incentives and teacher performance, indicating that improvements in salaries, allowances, and performance-based rewards are closely associated with higher levels of teacher commitment, punctuality, lesson preparation, and instructional effectiveness. Teachers who receive adequate and timely financial compensation are more motivated to engage fully in teaching responsibilities, while inadequate remuneration contributes to low morale, absenteeism, and diminished performance. These findings highlight the critical role of financial incentives in sustaining teacher productivity and accountability.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and school management should prioritize timely and adequate payment of salaries, allowances, and performance-based bonuses to boost teacher morale.

Additional financial incentives, such as transport allowances, housing support, and hardship allowances for teachers in rural areas like Kajara County, should be introduced to reduce financial stress and absenteeism.

Policies should be developed to link financial rewards to measurable performance indicators, encouraging accountability and commitment to quality teaching.

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List of abbreviations

CToM : Cognition Theory of Motivation
DEC : District Education Committee
GoU : Government of Uganda
GSS : Government Secondary schools
MoES : Ministry of Education and Sports
MTP : Motivation and Performance of Teachers
NGOs : Non-Governmental Organizations
SPSS : Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TISSA : Teachers Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa

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There is no conflict of interest.

Availability of data

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

Author's contribution

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

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