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THE EFFECT OF INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE A CASE STUDY OF BILAL ISLAMIC SECONDARY SCHOOL.

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Abstract

Despite the adoption of institutional culture in a bid to improve performance, the latter seems to have stagnated. This study was out to examine how institutional culture affects students' performance at Bilal Islamic Secondary School, Bwaise. specifically, the study was to examine the effects of: school values (honest and integrity); Leadership (communication skills, self-awareness) as well as justice (Fairness in stream allocations, dignity and respect) on the students' performance (Grades, students' failure rate, students' completion).
The study used a cross-sectional design because of the need to study the various institutional culture components and academic achievement at the same time. This was done by adopting a mixed approach. The implication was that self-administered questionnaires and structured interview guides were used to collect data. The data collected with the use of questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive analysis through use of frequency tables where conclusions were based on percentages as well as inferential analysis through use of multiple linear regression where conclusions were based on comparing the observed p values with the level of significance) qualitative data analyses. The data collected using the interview guide were analyzed using content and thematic analysis and presented as an interpretation of the narratives.
The study established that effect of school leadership (β=0.135, p<.001), school justice (β= 0.616, p<.000) as well as school values (β=0.138, p<.0001); and accepted all the null hypotheses that the three indicators of institutional culture significantly affected academic achievement of the learners.
The study recommends that the school leaders need to be trained on how to interpret the cues on the feelings of the students in this school; be trained on how to ensure that justice prevails in their respective schools to ensure that the effect on performance improves.

Keywords: Students' performance; institutional culture; leadership; values; school justice

Introduction

In a bid to improve educational outcomes, the role of institutional culture, especially in academic performance improvements, cannot be understated. On the sub Saharan continent, academic performance of the students, especially at secondary level, can be dubbed as far from desirable because of the fact that the failure rates are very

high (in some countries going up as high as 56%) and most of those passing are in the third most desirable grades (Brew et al., 2021). Based on the Cognitive Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), it is evident that the academic performance of students can be positively affected by the institutional cultures at the respective schools.

The academic performance of secondary school students in Uganda has been stagnating over the last three decades and with the increased enrollment, the rate of dropout and repetition are as well surging with UNEB Meta Data (1990-2020) showing that close to 30% of the students drop out of school, 22.6% fail to complete in the stipulated time period and an average of 11.2% passing in division one of UCE examinations while an average of 53.9% obtaining at least 2 principle passes at A-Level. Moreover, the dataset further shows that the problem of poor and declining or stagnating performance amongst secondary school students in Uganda has become pervasive in the last decade, consistent with the scholarly work of Elumu et al. (2023) in Soroti district.

Statement of the problem

One particular area of concern for educationists and policy makers is the consistently poor performance of the students in Uganda. Based on the Cognitive development theory (Vygotsky, 1978), one would expect that adopting refined institutional cultures would lead to improved academic performance of students. Despite the fact that secondary schools have adopted institutional culture refining practices, the actual performance of the students has remained poor for many and stagnated for the other schools (UNEB Metadata, 2023; Elumu et al., 2023). This undermines the vital role of institutional culture in improving the academic performance of students in Uganda. Secondly, it is not documented by how much performance is affected by each of the institutional cultures which creates a knowledge gap that needs to be bridged. Unless an empirical study is carried out to assess the effect of the various institutional cultures on academic performance of secondary school students in Uganda, the latter may stagnate further and the reputation of the country's education system may deteriorate. The need to bridge this academic gap forms a basis for the current study.

Purpose of the study

This study was out to examine how institutional cultures affect the performance of students in Bilal Islamic Secondary School.

Specifically, the study was out to: examine how school justice affect academic achievement of learners; examine how school values affect academic achievement of learners and; examine how school culture affect academic achievement of learners

Significance of the study

The study results will form a basis for improving the academic performance of the students based on institutional cultures such as justice. The study results will also be vital for improving the capacity of education policy makers at district and national levels to make evidence-based placement of head teachers for matters of improving the performance of respective schools.

Conceptual framework

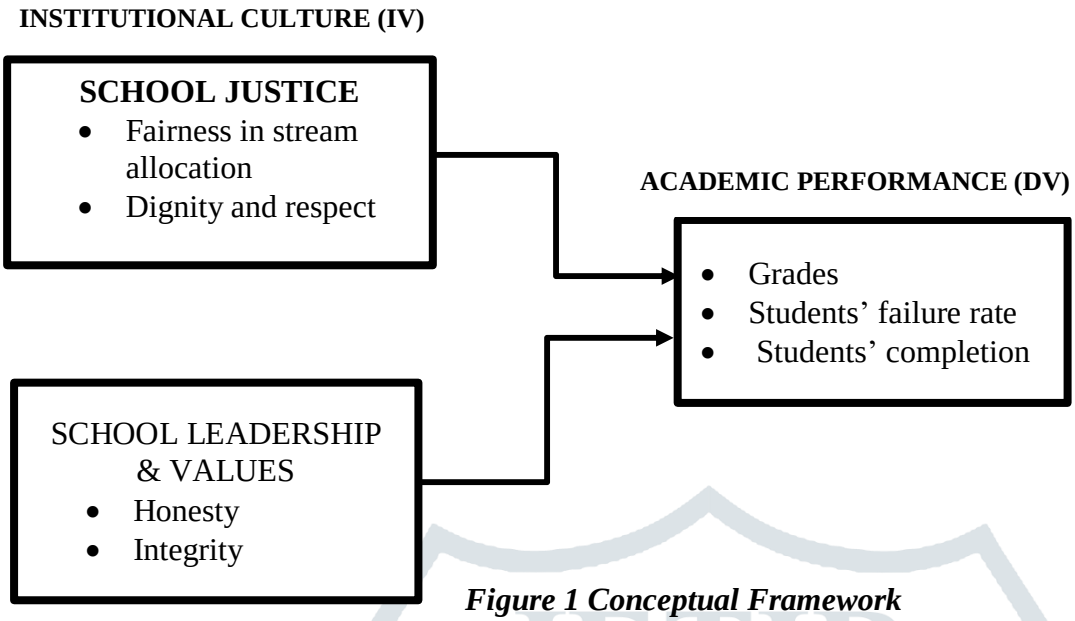


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Source: Brew et al. (2021); Modified by the researcher

The figure above presents a conceptual framework on the relationship between the variables and based on the Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). It is hypothesized that the effect of the institutional culture on the academic performance of the students is positive. However, it is not clear whether the effect of the IV on the DV is significant or linear and quantitative approaches must be adopted to find out the nature and significance of the relationship. The same can be said of the effects of the components of the study's independent variable on academic performance of students, leaving a gap that required bridging.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of scholars (Liu et al., 2021; Cura et al., 2020; Franz et al., 2020) have studied the effect of justice in school and classroom settings and indicated that there exists positive relationships, albeit not indicating the magnitude of the effects of justice or injustice (as perceived by the students), on their academic performance. This is mediated by separating the slow learners from the fast learners. Secondly, the studies may not reflect the state of affairs in Uganda since they had been carried out outside the country.

However, even with variations in the final results, the effects of school values on student achievement is studied on two different strands of literature. The qualitative strand of literature is based on theoretical underpinnings to state that school values is positively related with the student achievement (Wu et al., 2020; Vieira & Barbosa, 2020) as a matter of fact that integrity and honesty come into play. The scholars argue that this school values improve achievement through improving trust and respect as well as understanding the levels and channels of feedback. With apparent limitations of qualitative studies, the descriptive and inferential studies indicate positive and significant relationships between the variables under study.

The literature above posits that indeed, the various institutional cultures affect the performance of the learners up to a certain extent yet most of the studies are riddled with two main flaws and these include the following; It is worth noting that the literature cited above was made in reference to the other jurisdictions, leaving Ugandan

schools out. Though it is clear that the results can be applicable to the Ugandan case, it is not clear whether the results would be significant or whether the effect would be strong or otherwise and this justified the need for the current study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Based on the following Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula, the sample size od 272 students and 7 school administrators were randomly and purposively selected respectively. In this study, a 5-Point Likert Scale self-administered questionnaire was adopted to ensure that large sums of data would be collected and bias minimized (Leoni et al. 2022). To gain an in-depth analysis of the quantitative results, interviews were carried out on the key informants to obtain their feelings, opinions and thoughts about how the IV affected the DV in the selected school. Quantitative data analysis followed three methods i.e. simple descriptive methods (frequency tables and charts) as well as generating inferences (linear regression using SPSS 22) and conclusions based on comparing the observed and set significance levels. Qualitative data was analyzed by interpreting the narratives of the interviewees and key informants about the state of play of both variables. In the current study, thematic analysis was adopted for analysis of qualitative datasets

RESULTS

The effect of institutional culture on academic performance

From the descriptive analysis, it is clear that there exist average responses on all the variables in the current study. In a bid to improve the existing academic evidence on the effect of the institutional culture on the performance of students at Bilal Islamic SS, the current study used linear regression (run at 5% significance level in SPSS Version 22). The table below presents the effect of institutional culture on academic performance of students at Bilal Islamic SS.

Effect of Institutional culture on academic performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.622[a]	.387	.380	.45557	.387	50.379	3	239	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), values, leadership, justice

From the study results, it was revealed that with an R^2 of 0.387, it is clear that 38.7% of all changes in academic performance of students at Bilal Islamic SS are explained by changes in institutional culture in the stated area. A Sig. F Change value of 0.000 indicates that the effect of institutional culture on academic performance of students at this school is positive and significance, implying that the null hypothesis of a significant effect of institutional culture on academic performance of learners at Bilal Islamic SS is accepted. However, the effect of the individual components of the independent variable on academic performance of learners at Bilal Islamic SS is presented in the table that follows.

Coefficients: Effect of Institutional culture on academic performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.212	.364		.582	.561
	Leadership	.171	.064	.135	2.669	.008
	Justice	.669	.055	.616	12.063	.000
	Values	.124	.046	.138	2.704	.007

a. Dependent Variable: performance

With a constant of 0.364, and sig = 0.561, the study results indicated that there exist a number of factors that affected academic performance rather than institutional cultures albeit the fact that the effect of these variables on performance at Bilal Islamic SS is insignificant at a 5% significance level.

The results of the study ($\beta = 0.135$; $p < 0.05$) indicate that at a 5% significance level, a unit improvement in perceptions about school leadership leads to 0.135 increases in academic performance of students at Bilal Islamic SS. The implication is that at a 5% significance level, when students' perceptions about the leadership of the school doubles, academic performance of students improves by 13.5%. This implies that the null hypothesis of a statistically significant effect of school leadership on academic performance of students at Bilal Islamic SS is accepted.

In order for the study to improve on the validity of the quantitative findings, qualitative analyses were adopted and the results are summarized as in the narrative below:

> "…in schools, good leadership is all about building relationships between staff, teachers, and students to establish common respect… It is this common respect that improves the performance of the learners…" Interview with SR
> "…leadership is vital for improving performance because, based on my experience, it is ultimately important in establishing a vision and direction, supporting the professional growth of teachers and staff, and creating conditions in the school that support teaching and learning…effective leaders are able to tailor decisions for certain circumstances, eliminating chaos in the school…" Interview with HM on 6th March 2024

The significance of leadership in schools is emphasized by the qualitative interviews because of the fact that school leadership helps in creating a system that works for the good of the learner by improving cohesion amongst the stakeholders in the learning process.

The results of the study ($\beta = 0.616$; $p < 0.000$) indicate that at a 5% significance level, a unit improvement in perceptions about school justice leads to 0.616 increases in academic performance of students at Bilal Islamic SS. The implication is that at a 5% significance level, when students' perceptions about the school justice doubles, academic performance of students improves by 61.6%. This implies that the null hypothesis of a statistically significant effect of school justice on academic performance of students at Bilal Islamic SS is accepted.

In order for the study to improve on the validity of the quantitative findings about the significant effects of school justice on performance, qualitative analyses were adopted and the results are summarized as in the narrative below:

> "…students must feel valued to succeed. It is not all about where you come from and your status. When students feel that they are all equal without discrimination, they settle their minds to one thing: learning…" Interview with D/HM on 6th March 2024

> "…school justice is all about giving equal chances to all students and creating a holistic environment for the learning needs of all the students…" Interview with HM on 6th March 2024

The significance of leadership in schools is emphasized by the qualitative interviews because of the fact that school justice helps in creating a harmonized sense of belonging for all the students, psychologically affecting them positively for matters regarding their performance in class.

The results of the study ($\beta = 0.138$; $p < 0.05$) indicate that at a 5% significance level, a unit improvement in perceptions about school values leads to 0.138 increases in academic performance of students at Bilal Islamic SS. The implication is that at a 5% significance level, when students' perceptions about the school values doubles, academic performance of students improves by 13.8%. This implies that the null hypothesis of a statistically significant effect of school values on academic performance of students at Bilal Islamic SS is accepted.

In order for the study to improve on the validity of the quantitative findings about the significant effects of school values on performance, qualitative analyses were adopted and the results are summarized as in the narrative below:

> "…values instill discipline and sense of belonging in our students. This in terms reduces commotion in the classroom, reducing disruption for the other students and positively influences their academic performance in class…" Interview with D/HM on 6th March 2024
>
> "…Islam has a set of values that are practically unmatched, creating better learners in the field of work and in the communities that they live. Emphasizing values in this school not only affects the academic performance of the learners but also how they act in community, how they take on tasks and how they are able to spread the good deeds of Islam…to other non-Muslims…" Interview with HM on 6th March 2024

The significance of school values at this school is emphasized by the qualitative interviews because of the fact that school values help in an organized individual right from the classroom to the communities where they live.

CONCLUSION

The hypothesis that the relationship between school leadership on students' academic performance is positive and significant is accepted. The hypothesis that the relationship between school justice on students' academic performance is positive and significant is accepted. The hypothesis that the relationship between school leadership on students' academic performance is positive and significant is accepted. Finally, the null hypothesis of a significant effect of institutional culture on academic performance of learners at Bilal Islamic SS is accepted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the school leaders need to be trained on how to interpret the cues on the feelings of the students in this school; the school leaders need to be trained on how to ensure that justice prevails in their respective schools to ensure that the effect on performance improves and; the school leaders need to be trained on how to ensure that the students live and acknowledge the values of this school as the most important aspect of their stay at this school.

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