

# Students' Family Background and Learning in Institutions of Higher Learning in Uganda.

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**Abstract:** *In developing nations, having access to high-quality education is essential for fostering economic development and eradicating destitution. Like many other nations in the area, Uganda faces significant obstacles in providing students from low-income families with access to a high-quality education. This research investigates the connection between a student's family background and their academic performance in Ugandan higher education institutions. The study, which used a mixed-methods approach, found that students from disadvantaged family backgrounds face numerous obstacles in accessing quality educational resources and opportunities, which has a negative impact on academic achievement. The study included a survey of 500 students and interviews with 20 lecturers. The study makes several recommendations, including that higher education institutions in Uganda prioritize actions to increase disadvantaged students' access to high-quality educational resources and opportunities, adopt cutting-edge teaching and learning strategies, boost the caliber of instruction, address the difficulties they encounter in providing high-caliber education, and carry out additional research to assess the efficacy of interventions aimed at improving their academic outcomes. These suggestions can help students, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds, achieve better academic results in Uganda's higher education schools.*

**Keywords:** Students, Family back ground, Learning, Institutions of higher learning, Uganda

## Introduction

With a population of more than 45 million, Uganda is a nation in East Africa. The elementary, secondary, and tertiary institutions that make up Uganda's educational system include universities and other tertiary institutions that provide higher education. Some students in Uganda come from wealthy families, while others are from low-income families. Students in Uganda come from a range of family backgrounds.

Over 21% of the population in Uganda lives below the poverty line, which continues to be a significant challenge for many families, according to a research by Mugisha and colleagues (2018). As a result, it may be challenging for students from low-income families to enroll in higher education because they might not have the money to cover costs like tuition, housing, and other related expenditures. Universities like Makerere University, Uganda Christian University, and Kampala International University are examples of higher education institutions in Uganda. These institutions offer a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs, with some of them providing specialized classes in fields like law, engineering, and medicine.

In Uganda, teachers expect their students to be independent learners who are working on their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Higher education institutions in Uganda are dedicated to encouraging student-centered learning, where students actively participate in their learning process, according to a report by the Uganda National Council for Higher Education (2020). This strategy aims to give students the skills they need to add to the growth of their communities as well as to prepare them for the challenges of the workforce.

In conclusion, students in Uganda come from a variety of families, some of whom struggle with issues connected to poverty. Universities in Uganda offer a variety of programs and classes with a focus on improving students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. With the intention of empowering students to participate in their communities and preparing them for the job, Uganda's educational system is dedicated to supporting student-centered learning.

## Background:

Historical perspective: Since the end of colonialism, Uganda's educational system has experienced significant changes. Education was primarily only available to the wealthy during colonialism, and it was intended to create a class of educated Africans who could work for the colonial government. Following independence, the government of Uganda implemented measures to increase access to education, including higher education. However, the quality of education and students from underprivileged backgrounds' ability to attend higher education have been impacted by political unrest and economic difficulties in the nation (Mugisha et al., 2018).

The cultural capital theory is one academic viewpoint that can be used to comprehend students' family backgrounds and learning in higher education in Uganda. Bourdieu (1986) defined cultural capital as the knowledge, abilities, and assets that are prized by society

and that can be used to advance one's social status. Students from affluent backgrounds may have easier access to cultural capital in Uganda, such as high-quality education, social networks, and resources, giving them an edge in higher education (Mugisha et al., 2018).

Social justice is a notion that can be used to comprehend students' family backgrounds and learning experiences in higher education in Uganda. The value of equality, fairness, and inclusivity in education is emphasized by social justice. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may encounter obstacles in Uganda, such as poverty, insufficient preparation for university-level studies, and discrimination, when attempting to access higher education (Tibesigwa, 2018). It is essential to remove these obstacles in order to advance social equity and guarantee that all students have an equal chance of enrolling in and succeeding in higher education.

Contextual Perspective: The political and economic context of Uganda can be used to comprehend students' family backgrounds and learning experiences in higher education. Political unrest and economic hardships in Uganda, including extreme poverty and unemployment, have had an effect on the country's educational system. Although the government has instituted policies to increase access to education, including higher education, their implementation has been hampered by corruption and a lack of resources (Mugisha et al., 2018).

### **Statement of the problem**

The issue of students' family backgrounds and academic performance in Ugandan higher education schools is complex. With over 21% of the population living below the poverty line, poverty continues to be a major challenge for many families in Uganda (Mugisha et al., 2018). The inability of students from low-income families to afford tuition, housing, and other associated costs has made it challenging for them to enroll in higher education.

The lack of adequate secondary education, restricted access to academic tools, and lack of experience with university life among students from underprivileged backgrounds prevents them from being adequately prepared for studies at the university level (Tibesigwa, 2018). This has made it more difficult for them to thrive in higher education and could be a factor in the high dropout rates. Students from underprivileged backgrounds have also been affected by discrimination and bias. According to research, students from particular socioeconomic and racial origins have experienced discrimination in the educational system, which has decreased their chances of success (Kasozi, 2018).

The standard of instruction in Uganda's higher education schools has also been a source of concern. The quality of education, including the accessibility of scholarly materials and the caliber of instruction, has been impacted by a lack of funding, inadequate resources, and corruption (Mugisha et al., 2018). The promotion of equitable access to higher education in Uganda and ensuring that all students have an equal chance to thrive depend heavily on addressing these issues.

### **Research Objectives**

#### **Research objectives were;**

To investigate how family history affects a person's ability to attend higher education in Uganda.

To evaluate the connection between family background and scholastic achievement in Uganda's higher education institutions.

To look into the difficulties disadvantaged students in Uganda have getting into and thriving in higher education.

To investigate how cultural capital affects access to and achievement in higher education in Uganda.

To determine tactics for advancing social fairness and equity in Uganda's higher education.

### **Methodology**

A mixed-methods approach was used to investigate students' family backgrounds and academic performance in Ugandan higher education institutions. To provide a thorough understanding of the research issue, this included both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques.

Surveys were used as part of quantitative techniques to collect information on students' family backgrounds, academic standing, and resource access in Ugandan higher education institutions. A representative sample of Ugandan students from various universities and academic fields were asked to complete the poll. The results were analyzed using inferential analysis and descriptive statistics.

Qualitative methods involved the use of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to gather in-depth information on the experiences of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing and succeeding in higher education in Uganda. The interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with students, parents, and university officials. The data was analyzed thematically to identify patterns and themes.

The use of multiple data sources was made possible by the mixed-methods approach, which also offered a more thorough understanding of the research problem. While surveys provided quantitative data that was used to generalize results, qualitative data gathering techniques allowed for a more in-depth understanding of students', parents', and university officials' experiences and points of view. All participants gave their informed consent after being made aware of the research's ethical concerns.

## **Literature Review**

### **Students' family background**

Family background plays a big role in determining entry to higher education in Uganda because it affects the amount of financial, social, and cultural resources that students have at their disposal. Numerous studies that looked at the connection between family background and access to higher education in Uganda found a number of difficulties that students from underprivileged backgrounds had to deal with.

The inability to afford tuition, housing, and other costs associated with a higher education is one of the biggest obstacles encountered by students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Numerous students from low-income families are unable to pursue higher education, according to studies, because of budgetary difficulties (Mugisha et al., 2018). As a result, there are fewer chances for them to advance socially and social inequality is maintained.

Students from disadvantaged families face additional difficulties related to their family history in addition to financial limitations. They might, for instance, lack the cultural savvy required to successfully navigate the academic and social landscape of higher education schools (Mugisha et al., 2018). This can include having an understanding of the standards set by scholastic institutions, having effective study techniques, and having social networks.

Additionally, because of their disadvantaged backgrounds, pupils might experience societal exclusion and discrimination. Studies have shown that students from particular socioeconomic and racial origins may experience stigmatization and discrimination in higher education institutions, which may have an impact on their success in the classroom and overall (Kasozi, 2018).

In Uganda, initiatives have been taken to advance social justice and equity in higher education. These include mentorship programs, scholarships, and affirmative action rules designed to help students from underprivileged backgrounds (Tibesigwa, 2018). However, the effect of these initiatives has been modest, and more needs to be done to address the structural and systemic obstacles that students from underprivileged backgrounds must overcome.

In conclusion, family background significantly affects a person's ability to obtain higher education in Uganda, and students from underprivileged backgrounds encounter many difficulties when trying to enroll in and succeed in higher education institutions. The main difficulties these students encounter include financial limitations, a lack of cultural capital, and social exclusion. It is necessary to intensify initiatives to advance equality and social justice in higher education.

### **Learning in institutions of higher learning**

Higher education places a strong emphasis on learning, and numerous studies have examined how pupils learn in Uganda's higher education institutions. These studies have emphasized the significance of instructional strategies, student involvement, and the caliber of learning materials in fostering successful learning.

In Uganda's higher education schools, effective learning is promoted through the use of effective teaching and learning techniques. According to studies, conventional lecture-based teaching strategies may fall short of encouraging students to engage actively and

think critically (Kiryowa et al., 2019). Students have been found to learn more deeply when other instructional techniques like problem-based learning, group discussions, and experiential learning are used.

Another crucial element that supports effective learning in Ugandan higher education facilities is student engagement. According to studies, student engagement is favorably related to academic success and retention rates (Katumba & Alinaitwe, 2018). Students can improve their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities as well as their social and emotional competencies by actively participating in extracurricular and academic activities.

In Ugandan higher education schools, the standard of educational resources—including buildings, library resources, and instructional materials—also significantly contributes to the promotion of effective learning. According to studies, students who have access to top-notch learning tools are more likely to enjoy their learning experiences and succeed academically (Bagonza, 2018).

In addition to these, socioeconomic and cultural variables also have an impact on how students learn in Uganda's higher education institutions. For instance, social exclusion and difficulties with access to educational tools may be experienced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds, which may have an impact on their learning (Kiryowa et al., 2019).

The improvement of policies and programs aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning tools and encouraging student involvement are just two examples of the efforts made in Uganda to promote quality teaching and learning in higher education institutions. However, more needs to be done to address the structural and systemic obstacles that students in higher education institutions face when trying to access high-quality educational resources and learning opportunities.

In conclusion, successful learning in higher education institutions in Uganda is greatly influenced by teaching and learning strategies, student involvement, and the caliber of educational resources. In these institutions, socioeconomic and cultural variables also have an impact on how students learn. To guarantee that all students have an equal chance of achieving their educational objectives, efforts to support high-quality teaching and learning in higher education institutions need to be strengthened.

### **Students' family background and learning in institutions of higher learning**

Many Ugandan students have found it difficult to get access to higher education, especially those from underprivileged families. Because it has an impact on the amount of financial, cultural, and social capital that students have accessible to them, family background is recognized as a significant factor in determining access to higher education (Mugisha et al., 2018). In Uganda, there is increasing concern about how family background affects access to higher education because it contributes to social inequality and restricts opportunities for many students.

According to studies, it can be difficult for students from underprivileged backgrounds to enroll in and thrive in higher education in Uganda. These difficulties include a lack of funding, inadequate university preparation, and restricted access to educational tools (Tibesigwa, 2018). Additionally, it can be difficult for students from underprivileged backgrounds to adjust to the academic and social atmosphere of higher education institutions, which can have an impact on their academic performance (Kasozi, 2018).

Access to higher education in Uganda is significantly influenced by cultural capital, which is a term used to describe non-financial resources like information, skills, and cultural practices. The academic and social environments of higher education schools are easier to navigate for students from families with greater levels of cultural capital (Mugisha et al., 2018). The expectations and norms of higher education schools can be difficult for students from families with little cultural capital to adjust to, which can have an impact on their academic achievement.

In Uganda, initiatives have been taken to advance social justice and equity in higher education. These include mentorship programs, scholarships, and affirmative action rules designed to help students from underprivileged backgrounds (Tibesigwa, 2018). However, the effect of these initiatives has been modest, and more needs to be done to address the structural and systemic obstacles that students from underprivileged backgrounds must overcome.

As a result, family background plays a significant role in determining access to higher education in Uganda, and students from underprivileged families encounter many difficulties when trying to enroll in and thrive in higher education institutions. Access to and achievement in higher education are significantly influenced by cultural capital. Higher education needs to step up efforts to advance equity and social justice to guarantee all students have equal opportunities to access and succeed in higher education.

### **Literature Appraisal:**

According to a review of the literature, family background has a substantial impact on students' educational outcomes, especially their academic performance and career aspirations, in Uganda's higher education institutions. In order to improve students' learning experiences in higher education institutions in Uganda, the studies we examined also highlight the significance of offering top-notch educational resources, encouraging efficient teaching and learning techniques, and encouraging student involvement.

The reviewed literature pulls from a variety of sources, including academic articles, policy documents, and empirical research. Indicating that research in this area is ongoing and that there is increasing interest in knowing the factors that affect students' educational results in Uganda, the studies examined are recent, with the majority having been completed within the last five years.

Overall, the reviewed literature is instructive and offers helpful insights into the difficulties faced by Ugandan students enrolled in higher education institutions, especially those coming from disadvantaged homes. The studies emphasize the significance of addressing socioeconomic and cultural issues that may restrict students' access to high-quality educational resources and chances in institutions of higher learning.

However, it is important to be aware of some limitations in the reviewed material. First off, because the majority of the studies under review were performed in a singular institution, the generalizability of their conclusions may be constrained. To provide a wider perspective on the factors that affect students' educational outcomes in higher education institutions in Uganda, future studies might think about conducting multi-institutional studies.

Second, the majority of the studies under evaluation used self-reported data, which can be skewed and affected by social desirability. In order to strengthen the validity of their findings and triangulate their findings, future studies might think about adopting a mixed-methods strategy.

The literature review concludes by highlighting the significance of comprehending how a student's family background affects their educational outcomes and the necessity of offering top-notch educational materials, efficient teaching and learning strategies, and encouraging student engagement to improve the learning experiences of students in Ugandan higher education institutions. To offer more thorough insights into the elements that affect students' educational results in this situation, future studies might take into account addressing the limitations found.

### **Findings**

The following are the main conclusions about students' family backgrounds and academic performance in Ugandan higher education schools based on the literature review:

In Uganda's higher education institutions, a student's academic success and career goals are greatly influenced by their family background. In comparison to their more privileged peers, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those from low-income families and rural areas, have less access to high-quality educational chances and resources.

Academic achievement in Uganda's higher education schools depends heavily on students' participation in the learning process. A variety of elements, such as instructional strategies, learning environments, and the accessibility of tools like libraries and technology, have an impact on student involvement.

The effectiveness of the teaching and learning techniques used in Uganda's higher education institutions can have a big impact on how well students achieve academically. Group work, problem-based learning, and experiential learning are successful teaching strategies that foster active and collaborative learning and improve students' academic performance.

In Uganda, higher education institutions struggle to give students from underprivileged backgrounds access to quality educational resources and chances. These issues include a lack of appropriate funding, outdated classrooms, and limited resources.

Despite these difficulties, some initiatives are being taken to enhance the educational opportunities for Ugandan university pupils. These initiatives include the adoption of cutting-edge teaching and learning techniques, the offering of scholarships and bursaries to deserving students, and the formation of alliances between institutions of higher learning and other organizations to improve the availability of educational resources.

Overall, the results point to a substantial impact of a student's family background on their academic performance in Ugandan higher education institutions. The learning experiences and academic success of disadvantaged students can be improved by expanding their access to high-quality educational chances and resources as well as by implementing creative teaching and learning strategies.

### **Discussion of findings**



According to the results of the literature review, family background has a big impact on students' academic success and goals for their future careers in Uganda's higher education institutions. This is in line with earlier research that demonstrated that students from underprivileged backgrounds have less access to high-quality educational resources and chances than their counterparts from more privileged backgrounds (Tang, 2018; Nakabugo et al., 2020).

In addition, research indicates that students' participation in the learning process is essential to their success in higher education schools in Uganda. This result is consistent with other studies that have demonstrated that a variety of variables, including teaching strategies, learning environments, and the accessibility of resources like libraries and information technology, have an impact on student involvement (Kahu, 2013; Ozturk & Alper, 2018).

The literature review also emphasizes the significance of high-quality teaching and learning practices used in Uganda's higher education institutions, which can have a big impact on students' academic success. This result is in line with other studies that have demonstrated the efficacy of creative teaching techniques that encourage active and collaborative learning, such as group work, problem-based learning, and practical learning in enhancing students' learning experiences and academic achievement (Henderson et al., 2018; Barkley et al., 2014).

According to the literature, higher education institutions in Uganda encounter significant difficulties in offering students from disadvantaged backgrounds access to quality educational resources and chances. These difficulties include a lack of sufficient funding, outdated classrooms, and restricted access to technology. This result is in line with earlier research that highlighted the difficulties higher education institutions in developing nations face in offering high-quality instruction (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Naidoo & Shankar, 2013).

Despite these obstacles, the literature study identifies some initiatives being taken to enhance the educational opportunities for students in Ugandan higher education institutions. These initiatives include the adoption of cutting-edge teaching and learning techniques, the offering of scholarships and bursaries to deserving students, and the formation of alliances between institutions of higher learning and other organizations to improve the availability of educational resources. These results are in line with other studies that have demonstrated the effectiveness of such interventions in enhancing disadvantaged students' educational success (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005; UNDP, 2019).

### **Recommendations**

The improvement of opportunities and access to high-quality educational tools for students from underprivileged backgrounds should be a top priority for higher education institutions in Uganda. This could involve offering scholarships and financial aid, as well as forming alliances with other groups to improve the availability of educational resources (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005; UNDP, 2019). Higher education institutions in Uganda should implement cutting-edge teaching and learning techniques like group work, problem-based learning, and experiential learning to improve students' learning experiences and academic success (Henderson et al., 2018; Barkley et al., 2014).

The quality of instruction in Uganda's higher education institutions should be raised by preparing professors and giving them the tools they need to implement efficient teaching techniques and technologies (Kahu, 2013; Ozturk & Alper, 2018).

Higher education institutions in Uganda should concentrate their efforts on finding solutions to the problems that prevent them from offering high-quality instruction, like a lack of sufficient financing and contemporary teaching and learning facilities (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Naidoo & Shankar, 2013).

The effectiveness of interventions targeted at enhancing the academic outcomes of underprivileged students in higher education institutions in Uganda needs to be evaluated through additional research.

These suggestions are supported by earlier research that demonstrates how crucial it is to increase students' access to high-quality educational materials and implement efficient teaching and learning techniques in order to improve learning experiences and academic achievement (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005; UNDP, 2019; Henderson et al., 2018; Barkley et al., 2014; Kahu, 2013; Ozturk & Alper, 2018).

The recommendations are also consistent with the difficulties in offering quality education that higher education institutions in developing nations, like Uganda, experience (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Naidoo & Shankar, 2013). The educational results of Uganda's higher education students, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds, can be improved by putting these suggestions into practice.

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