



Original Article

Explaining the Urban Schools' Advantage in Literacy in English Performance: Do schools' Locations Make a Difference?

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.5.2.717>

Date Published: ABSTRACT

20 Jun 2022

Keywords:

School Type,
Academic,
Performance.

The study was to investigate the association between rural and urban pupils' academic performance in literacy in English. The researcher collected data on the Primary Leaving Examination, the entranced exam to secondary school level in Uganda. The subject selected for analysis was Literacy in English. There were twelve schools in the Wakiso district that were used for the study. A fixed- effect model with a single covariate (ANCOVA) was used to analyse the data. The design is Ex-post facto. The results show that the proportion of learners rated proficient in Literacy in English ($M = 4.16, SE = .13$) in urban location was significantly ($p = .01$) higher than the learners in rural location ($M = 5.12, SE = .07$). It should be noted that, in Uganda, the lower the mean score, the better the performance whereas the higher the mean score the weaker the performance (i.e., 9 is the lowest score whereas 1 is the highest score).

APA CITATION

Ochwo, P. (2022). Explaining the Urban Schools' Advantage in Literacy Performance: Do schools' Locations Make a Difference? *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 5(2), 212-216. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.5.2.717>

CHICAGO CITATION

Ochwo, Pius. 2022. "Explaining the Urban Schools' Advantage in Literacy Performance: Do schools' Locations Make a Difference?". *East African Journal of Education Studies* 5 (2), 212-216. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.5.2.717>.

HARVARD CITATION

Ochwo, P. (2022) "Explaining the Urban Schools' Advantage in Literacy Performance: Do schools' Locations Make a Difference?", *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 5(2), pp. 212-216. doi: 10.37284/eajes.5.2.717.

IEEE CITATION

P. Ochwo. "Explaining the Urban Schools' Advantage in Literacy Performance: Do schools' Locations Make a Difference?", *EAJES*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 212-216, Jun. 2022.

MLA CITATION

Ochwo, Pius. "Explaining the Urban Schools' Advantage in Literacy Performance: Do schools' Locations Make a Difference?". *East African Journal of Education Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 2, Jun. 2022, pp. 212-216, doi:10.37284/eajes.5.2.717

INTRODUCTION

Academic performance of learners has remained a great concern for all major stakeholders in education. The level of academic performance of any student goes a long way to predict their future career. Factors like inheritance and school location account for variances in student performance. School locations are more often described as semi-urban, urban, and rural. This classification at times may influence education distribution and social amenities like water, electricity, schools, and health services. It goes without saying that; such social services are usually consecrated in urban locales. These amenities may act as pulls to the educated and the rich members of the society.

In support of this, Bratte (2000); Onoyase (2015), and Ortlieb (2007) assert that infrastructural facilities in urban areas are a pull to the elite and the rich, who usually have the economic power to provide scholastic and other relevant educational facilities necessary to their children, e.g., Text-books, pens, pencils, as well as other instructional supplies. Parents in these locations can also afford the costs for private tutoring of their children at home, which probably enhances the students' academic performance. Low-income earners, who are usually, peasant, on the other hand, mainly occupy the rural communities. These localities do not have amenities like clean water, electrical energy, good road network, as well as fairly-resourced learning institutions. The hesitancy to provide services in these places may be because of thoughtlessness of government to the predicament of the people. Many of such remote places tend to lack suitable educational amenities. In support of this, Ochwo (2013) points out that many rural schools are in a sorry state because they do not have essential facilities. The poor environment and inadequate infrastructure hugely lead to poor learning and consequently weak academic performance

RELATED LITERATURE

The research that investigated whether the location of schools has any influence in learners academic achievement across one of the Nigerian States, the findings suggest a statistically significant disparity between the achievement levels of students' academic performance for the different locales where schools are found (i.e., urban or rural). Similarly, (Owoeye and Yara, 2011) in their study, affirm that urban schools attain superior grades than the rural ones. In the same vein, Young (1998) found a statistically significant difference in academic attainment between rural schools performance and the urban. Their study found out that urban environment was more suitable for better performance of learners across the Schools in Western Australia. Furthermore, Xu (2009) investigated whether student performance and school location may have an effect on the take-home assignments given to learners. Results show that students who hail from urban background were more motivated to complete their home work in time and competently.

Generally, in the literature on whether a school location is a factor in students' academic achievement, some studies uphold that learners in urban schools are more likely to perform better due to availability of instructional materials that are synonymous with urban areas. Rural areas lack vital amenities that most of the time may affect students level of education achievement as seen in students grades from time to time. Interestingly some studies find absolutely no statistical difference in students' academic performance whether or not they are in urban or rural set-ups (Cakir et al. (2009).

METHODOLOGY

As mentioned above, the research design chosen for this investigation is the Ex-post facto since the data were already there before the researcher visited the schools and obtained the student's grades. Therefore, there was one instrument used in the survey: written test of Literacy in English that the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB)

administered in November, 2019, prior to the collection of the research data.

Twelve primary schools were randomly selected in the Wakiso district on the basis of urban and rural areas. The sample is made up of ($n = 903$) urban and rural pupils. The student's results were in grades 1 to 9. While grades 1 – 2 were regarded as distinctions and 3 to 6 were credits. 7 and 8 were taken as ordinary passes, whereas Grade 9 is a failure. The students' results were converted to raw score.

The One-Way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was the statistical procedure used to examine whether the type of school a pupil attends has a significant difference in their overall performance in the Literacy in English summative examinations, controlling for pupils background knowledge in the subject area.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Question of the Survey

Is there any association between school type (i.e., urban or rural) and pupil's performance at Primary level on the English Literacy Examinations in Uganda?

Descriptive Statistics

All outliers were removed ($n=49$) prior to employing the ANCOVA statistical data analysis procedure. Both the Literacy in English pre-test as well as the post-test grades were subjected to a critical scrutiny to eliminate any score found to have $> \pm 1.96$ z scores. This is how the 903-sample size was achieved for the final analysis.

The proportion of learners proficient in Literacy in English in the Pre-test ($M = 7.02$, $SD = 2.09$) was higher than that of post-test ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 2.30$). The score for the urban pre-test in comparison to the rural post-test show that the proportion of urban students scores ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.17$) is higher than

the rural schools ($M = 4.18$, $SD = .12$). Finally, the proportion of learners score in the post test literacy in English for urban schools was higher ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 2.05$) than the rural schools ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.94$).

ANCOVA Assumptions

For the Independence of Covariate and independent variable the results show that the regression coefficient is .268, which is more than .05, the p value is close to .05 ($p = .052$), we can conclude that the assumption is met. Levene's Test indicates that the assumption homogeneity is met, since $F = .002$ and $p = .962$.

Looking at the results of the interaction, it can be seen that the p value is not significant, $p = .800$. Therefore, the assumption of difference in regression slopes is met. Normality was gauged using the Shapiro & Wilk (S-W) test that provided evidence of the extent to which the sample distribution was statistically different from a normal distribution. Additionally, the assumption was examined using the Quantile-quantile (Q-Q) plots. Points fell close to the diagonal line, suggesting evidence of normality.

The skewness statistics of the residual was $-.236$ and kurtosis was -1.025 , both are within the range of an absolute value of 2.0, suggesting some evidence of normality. The histogram, however, did not in any way look like what most people would consider a normal shape. Because of this, other forms of normality were used as evidence. Overall, considering the forms of evidence examined, normality is a reasonable assumption. In examining the scatterplot for overall evidence of linearity, the points fell relatively linearly (in other words there was not curvilinear or other nonlinear association). The scatterplot suggested evidence of overall linearity as there was a relatively clear pattern of points that suggest a positive and linear association between the depended variable and the covariate.

Table 1: Analysis of Covariance Summary

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	103.769	1	103.769	34.384	.001	.035
Pre-tests	1093.843	1	1093.843	362.447	.001	.277
Sch. Type	37.690	1	37.690	12.489	.001	.013
Error	2857.988	902	3.018			

A One-Factor ANCOVA was conducted to examine School Type influence (i.e., urban or rural) on student Literacy in English performance by controlling for Literacy in English pre-test. The independent variable was School Type. The dependent variable was scores on the primary seven literacy exams (i.e., the post-test) that is administered at the completion of the primary education cycle in Uganda. Scores on the mock English in literacy test administered mid-way of the primary seven classes was the covariate (i.e., the pre-test).

The results of the ANCOVA show a statistically significant main effect of the pre-test (i.e., covariate) on the predicted variable ($F = 362.447$, $df = 1, 902$, $p < .001$). There were also statistically significant main effects of School Type ($F = 12.489$, $df = 1, 902$, $p < .001$) on the post-test adjusting for the pre-test. The School Type effect size was small (partial $\eta^2 = .013$) and large (partial $\eta^2 = .277$) for the covariate. Observed power was strong for both.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study results show that rural children tend to lag behind their urban counterparts in Literacy performance. Over the years, many studies have investigated the factor that influences academic performance. Even though there may be a few studies with divergent results, overall, the results of these studies tend to suggest that locale influences academic performance. Indeed, in the Ugandan context, Nalugo (2015) alludes to that fact. Many years in a row, the Primary Leaving Examinations results show that schools located in urban places have continued their dominance over the rural schools.

Furthermore, the finding of this investigation is in agreement with one of Mofon's findings of 2001. The findings revealed that there is a significant difference in academic performance between urban and rural students in literacy. The present study similarly found a statistically significant difference in the academic performance among students in urban and rural schools in English in literacy among primary school children in Uganda. On the other hand, the present study disagrees with that of Okolosi (2007). Okolosi's study found no significant association between urban and rural students' academic performance in Literacy. The possible reason for this dissimilarity might be attributed to fact that the classes are different and their tests were administered by different test companies.

CONCLUSION

It can be noted that the apparent disparity in the achievement of Literacy in English may be because of the imbalance in the distribution of scholastic materials across all schools.

Recommendations

In light of the study results and conclusions thereof, there is need to ensure equitable allocation of educational amenities among schools in urban and rural areas. There should be regular supervision of schools in the rural areas to make sure that teachers and students are up to the task. Furthermore, incentives should be given to teachers posted to rural schools as a way of motivating them to improve student achievement.

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