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**SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND LEARNERS' SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN  
SELECTED LOWER UNIVERSAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**CASE STUDY: MASAKA CITY**

A dissertation presented to

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree

**Master of Education in Educational Management and Administration**

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**Master's Dissertation**

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Submitted to the Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research, and Enterprise

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this research project to my husband, Mr. Opio Alex King, and my children: Lubanga Maara Divine Mercy, Inez Motta Uriella, and Lakica Alexandra Zoe, and to my dear parents, Mr. and Mrs .Micheal J. Ssali.

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Lastly but not least, I would like to appreciate the Almighty God for the gift of life and wisdom granted to me during my academic journey. My Lord, thank you.

## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

BoGS	:	Board of Governors
CBC	:	Competence-Based Curriculum
COVID – 19	:	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CVI	:	Content Validity Index
DES	:	Diploma Secondary Education
DHS	:	Demographic Housing Survey
EFA	:	Education for All
Et-al	:	Latin words meaning and others
HSES	:	High Socio–Economic Status
Km	:	Kilometre
LDCs	:	Less Developed Countries
LSES	:	Low Socio–Economic Status
MDGs	:	Millennium Development Goals
MoES	:	Ministry of Education and Sports
NFE	:	Non-Formal Education – Schools
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organizations
OECD	:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDM	:	Parish Development Model
PGDE	:	Post Graduate Diploma in Education
PhD	:	Doctor of Philosophy
PTA	:	Parent Teacher Association
SDGs	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SEDP	:	Secondary Education Development Programme
SES	:	Socio-Economic Status
SFGs	:	School Facilitation Grants

SPSS	:	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
SSA	:	Sub-Saharan Africa
UBoS	:	Uganda Bureau of Standards
UCE	:	Uganda Certificate of Education
UMU	:	Uganda Martyrs University
UN	:	United Nations
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific Cultural Organization
UNICEF	:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPE	:	Universal Primary Education
USA	:	United States of America
USE	:	Universal Secondary Education

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## Abstract

The study examined “**Socio-Demographic Factors and Learners’ School Attendance in Selected Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City.**” More specifically, the study examined:

- i) The influence of household characteristics on learners’ school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City.
- ii) The influence of learners’ school-based demographic characteristics on learners’ school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City.
- iii) The influence of learners’ personal-based socio–demographic factors on school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City.

The researcher was motivated by the desire to bridge the epistemological gaps on socio–demographic characteristics and learners’ school attendance to create new knowledge. The study was underpinned by the propositions and assumptions of Murray Douglas McGregor’s Theory “X” and Theory “Y”. From the point of view of this theory, the learners’ school attendance may be related or influenced by the socio–demographic factors. Thus, the study undertook to verify the hypotheses that there is a correlational relationship between socio–demographic factors and learners’ school attendance in lower universal secondary schools. The researcher used a descriptive survey design to elicit data on the independent and dependent variables, and data were collected from teachers, parents, and students using questionnaires, interview guides, and focus group discussion guides. Data were analyzed using mixed methods. Qualitative data were presented thematically using themes derived from the specific objectives, whereas quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviations. The findings from the study revealed that learners from families of low socioeconomic status (LSES) lack role models to emulate and job aspirations. The academic and job aspirations of such children tend to be inclined toward what their parents do in order to earn a living. While children from families of High Socio–Economic Status (HSES) have role models to emulate, have academic and future job aspirations, and they attend school regularly than their counterparts from LSES families. The researcher concluded that learners’ school attendance may be due to the interplay of a variety of factors like socio–economic factors, parents’ level of education, school-based factors, as well as learner-based factors.

Therefore, the researcher concluded that learners from LSES families should be given psycho-social support and educational support and encouraged them remain in school.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

Although much has been researched and written on Socio – Demographics, it is noticed that earlier studies by scholars like Fajriyah (2023), Kujor et.al (2021), Macunu et.al (2021) and Msafiri and Lianyu (2022), the studies did not give attention to learners’ school attendance particularly in public schools or Universal Secondary Education (USE) launched in 2007 to make secondary education accessible, affordable, to promote equity among boys and girls of school-going-age and to boost retention and completion levels (MoES, 2010). It is found that socio–demographic characteristics have a bearing on learners’ school attendance. For this reason, therefore, the researcher decided to conduct an exhaustive study to fill this epistemological gap.

This chapter discusses the background to the study, statement of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, justification of the study, significance of the study and the conceptual framework.

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

##### **1.1.1 Historical perspective**

Globally, school attendance has become a more desirable activity for learners across the world (UNESCO, 2020). The global initiative to promote Education for All (EFA) can be traced to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Act 26 of 1948), which endorsed universal human rights and emphasized education for all at elementary stages as both fundamental and compulsory (UN, 1948:7). From this commitment by the United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 was developed to advance inclusive, accessible, and affordable education irrespective of sex, gender, race, religion, or ethnicity. Education transforms individuals into useful human resources, and this transformation requires school attendance.

In the 1990s, two landmark global moves were undertaken towards achieving education for all. In 1993, world leaders met in Jomtien, Thailand, and adopted the Declaration of Education for All, in which Uganda committed to targets that included Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) by the year 2000 (MoES, 2007). Similarly, in 2000,

world leaders at the United Nations Conference adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. Goal No. 2 of the MDGs, focusing on achieving UPE and USE, aligns closely with Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable education. Without achieving Goal 4, it is difficult for countries to claim full attainment of the SDGs (UN, 2015). Regular school attendance by learners is therefore crucial for realizing educational goals, as chronic absenteeism hinders learners' ability to conceptualize what is taught (Farrant, 2007).

Empirical studies from various countries demonstrate that school attendance is influenced by multiple factors. In Turkey, Yildiz (2018) found that learners' home conditions positively correlated with school attendance, while in the USA, Roby (2013) reported that persistent absenteeism was linked to demographic factors. In the Republic of Honduras, school absenteeism increased sharply in secondary schools as students progressed to higher grades (Lematango & Nephath, 2021). In South Africa, before 1994, the education system was racially segregated into four major racial groups—Black, Indian/Asian, Coloureds, and Whites—with non-white populations experiencing social deprivation in terms of resources and teaching quality (Amakuro, Robynne & Nsengiyumva, 2025). Following the advent of democratic rule in 1994, schools were unified (Spaull, 2015), and attendance rates rose significantly, although universal attendance at the secondary level has not yet been achieved (Amakuro et al., 2025). In Kenya, a study by Matage and Begi (2017), cited by Lematango and Nephath (2021), found that socio-economic factors significantly influenced learners' school attendance and performance in both school-based examinations and the Kenya Certificate of Education (KCE). Pupils with irregular attendance often had lower academic achievement and higher dropout risks. In Tanzania, a qualitative study by Tukumbukege and Yohana (2024) revealed that learners in open schools (offering Non-Formal Education) exhibited variations in demographic characteristics such as age, sex, education level, and occupation, all of which influenced attendance. The authors hypothesized that these socio-demographic variations had a direct effect on attendance patterns. In response to such challenges, the Tanzanian government launched the Secondary Education Development Programme (SEDP) in 2004 to expand enrolment and completion rates in secondary education with acceptable learning outcomes (Kanukisya, 2012).

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), enrolment and retention rates remain low, with only 63% of young people enrolling in primary and secondary schools, and the figure drops to 42% at the upper secondary level (UNESCO, 2020). The region consequently has the highest number of

school dropouts in the world. Formal education in SSA faces persistent challenges, including underfunding, inadequate and poorly maintained infrastructure, non-inclusive systems, limited teacher supply and high turnover, and poor academic performance among learners (Wangui, 2013).

In Uganda, the primary goal of Universal Secondary Education (USE) is to provide essential facilities, school facilitation grants (SFGs), and remuneration for teachers, enabling children of school-going age to enroll in, remain in, and complete secondary education through both formal and alternative approaches. This initiative targets those previously unable to access private schools due to financial constraints (MoES, 2007). While enrolment in government-aided USE schools has almost tripled, learners' attendance remains a significant challenge despite the removal of school fees (MoES, 2020).

### **1.1.2 Theoretical perspective**

The study was guided by the assumptions of Theory 'X' and Theory 'Y'. This theory was advanced in the 1960s by Murray Douglas McGregor. McGregor proposes that people who are inclined towards the propositions of Theory 'X' are inherently lazy, they dislike work and will avoid it if possible, whereas people who are inclined towards the propositions of Theory 'Y', learners are self-driven and they can work under minimum supervision (Koontz & Weirich, 2016). Scholars like Farrant (2007) and others suggest that McGregor's Theory 'X' and Theory 'Y' apply to education when it comes to learners' school attendance.

Farrant (2007) and Derville (2006) assert that students who usually dodge school without genuine reasons are inclined to the assumptions of Theory 'X', whereas those who are ambitious and intrinsically motivated are inclined to the prepositions of Theory 'Y'. Learners who take education to be important in their lives are likely to attend school than their counterparts who wait to be told either by their teachers or parents. For this reason, therefore, this theory is applicable when studying the influence of socio-demographic factors on learners' school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City.

### **1.1.3 Conceptual perspective**

Learners' school attendance conceptually refers to the frequency with which a learner has been present at school in a week, month, or term for regular school activities and programs (Farrant, 2007). The Lower Secondary School Curriculum is competence-based, and what learners study theoretically in classes is given hands-on areas of integration, which are done practically (MoES, 2020). This curriculum can only bear fruit if students can attend the school regularly. A learner who is not regularly present at school is chronically absent, whereas school absenteeism refers to the recurring or chronic absence of learners from school, which may arise due to several factors (Jyotsna et-al, 2024). Irregular school attendance in USE schools is one of the major challenges affecting the implementation of USE and the Lower Secondary School Competence-Based Curriculum in Uganda (MoES, 2022). The term socio-demographic factors here, literally refers to characteristics describing learners by their age, sex, gender, household characteristics, school characteristics, and the learners' intrinsic characteristics. It can also refer to the learners' residence, the socio-economic status, among others. These demographics were hypothesized to have an influence on students' or learners' school attendance in USE schools (Jyotsna, 2024; Kujur, 2021).

### **1.1.4 Contextual perspective**

Masaka City has five government-aided USE schools (Office of the City Education – Masaka City Report, 2024). Out of the five USE schools, Nyendo – Mukungwe Division has 3 schools, and Kimaanya – Kabonera Division has two schools. The schools in Nyendo – Mukungwe Division are in a distance of less than 3 km from one another, and those from Kimaanya – Kabonera Division are more than 12 kilometres from one another. The distance from one school to another can explain the variation when it comes to learners' attendance at school in the two divisions of Masaka City. The City Education Officer's Report of 2024 showed that USE schools in Nyendo – Mukungwe Division were city-based, had higher enrolment, and students can attend school regularly than those in Kimaanya – Kabonera, which are far apart from each other and mainly rural-based. Since the inception of USE in Uganda in 2007, learners' school attendance has remained one of the challenges. To address this challenge, there is a need for concerted efforts from all the stakeholders in education, not only the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) alone (MoES, 2020).

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Since the introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007, Uganda has experienced a rapid increase in secondary school enrolment. However, this expansion has been accompanied by challenges, particularly irregular student attendance. According to the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), school attendance in USE schools ranges between 63% and 68% (MoES, 2023), with absenteeism attributed to factors such as illness and other socio-demographic conditions (DHS, 2022). Irregular attendance adversely affects learners' academic performance and disrupts lesson continuity for both teachers and students. The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) implemented in lower secondary schools emphasizes active student participation, which further underscores the importance of regular attendance. Despite policy efforts, persistent absenteeism—estimated at 7% to 11% on any given weekday in Masaka City—remains a significant barrier to achieving the objectives of USE and Uganda's Vision 2040. This study, therefore, sought to examine the influence of socio-demographic factors on learners' school attendance in selected USE schools in Masaka City and to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving attendance outcomes.

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

### **1.3.1 Major Objective**

To investigate the effect of socio-demographic characteristics on learners' school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

- i) To examine the influence of household characteristics (home-based) on learners' school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City.
- ii) To assess the influence of learners' school-based demographic characteristics on learners' school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City.
- iii) To examine the influence of learners' personal-based socio-demographic factors on school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

- i) What is the influence of household (home-based) characteristics on learners' school attendance in lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City?
- ii) What is the influence of learners' school-based characteristics on learners' school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City?
- iii) What is the influence of learners' personal-based socio–demographic factors on school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City?

## **1.5 Scope of the study**

### **1.5.1 Content Scope**

The study focused on the influence of socio–demographic factors on learners' school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary School in Masaka City. The emphasis was put on learners' household characteristics, socio–economic characteristics, and learners' personal-based socio–demographic factors and how they influence school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City. This is because the report of the City Education Officer of 2022 – 2023 showed that there is poor school attendance, particularly in USE schools in Masaka City.

### **1.5.2 Geographical Scope**

The study was conducted in lower universal secondary schools found in Masaka City. Masaka City lies in the Southern part of the central region, approximately 80 miles (128 km) southwest of Uganda's capital, Kampala. The city is located on the following latitude and longitude  $0^{\circ} 18 27.6N 31^{\circ} 42 28.19E$ , respectively. Masaka City is bordered by Kyotera District in the South, Masaka District to the East, Kyotera District in the South, Kalungu District to the North, Bukomansimbi District in the West, and Lwengo District in the South West (Masaka City, 2024). The geographical area was selected because it has more USE schools than any other district in greater Masaka. The city has five schools.

### **1.5.3 Time Scope**

The study considered data available since 2020 to date. A period of five years is considered reasonably enough to draw inferences (Kothari, 2016). The second justification for this timeframe is that, post-COVID-19 learners' school attendance in USE schools in Masaka City

reduced when compared with pre-COVID-19 school attendance in USE schools in Masaka (Masaka City Education Report, 2024). The researcher wanted to find out whether socio-demographic factors influence the learners' irregular school attendance.

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

It is hoped that the study may be useful to different stakeholders in education in the following ways:

### **To teachers and head teachers:**

The study may be significant to the teachers and head teachers as it will bring to their attention the effects of socio-demographic factors and how they influence learners' school attendance in USE schools in Masaka City. The finding may prompt them to put in place a probable intervention on how to increase learners' school attendance in USE schools.

### **To students/learners:**

The findings of the study may help students to know that school attendance has a correlation with academic performance, and this directly or indirectly influences them to regularly attend school.

### **To parents and guardians:**

The findings may help parents to get to know that one of their cardinal roles in the implementation of USE is to foster learners' school attendance by encouraging them to attend school regularly. This study may help them to understand how socio-demographic factors influence learners' school attendance as well as academic achievement.

### **To the researcher:**

The study was also used to help the researcher to be awarded a Master of Education Management and Administration of Uganda Martyrs University (UMU), since it is one of the requirements a student must fulfill before graduating.

### **To policy makers in the MoES:**

The Education Standards Agency (ESA) and the Inspectorate Department of the MoES may get useful information on learners' school attendance in USE schools, and the findings of the study

may be used as a basis to sensitize parents and teachers on the influence of demographic factors on learners' school attendance.

**To future researchers:**

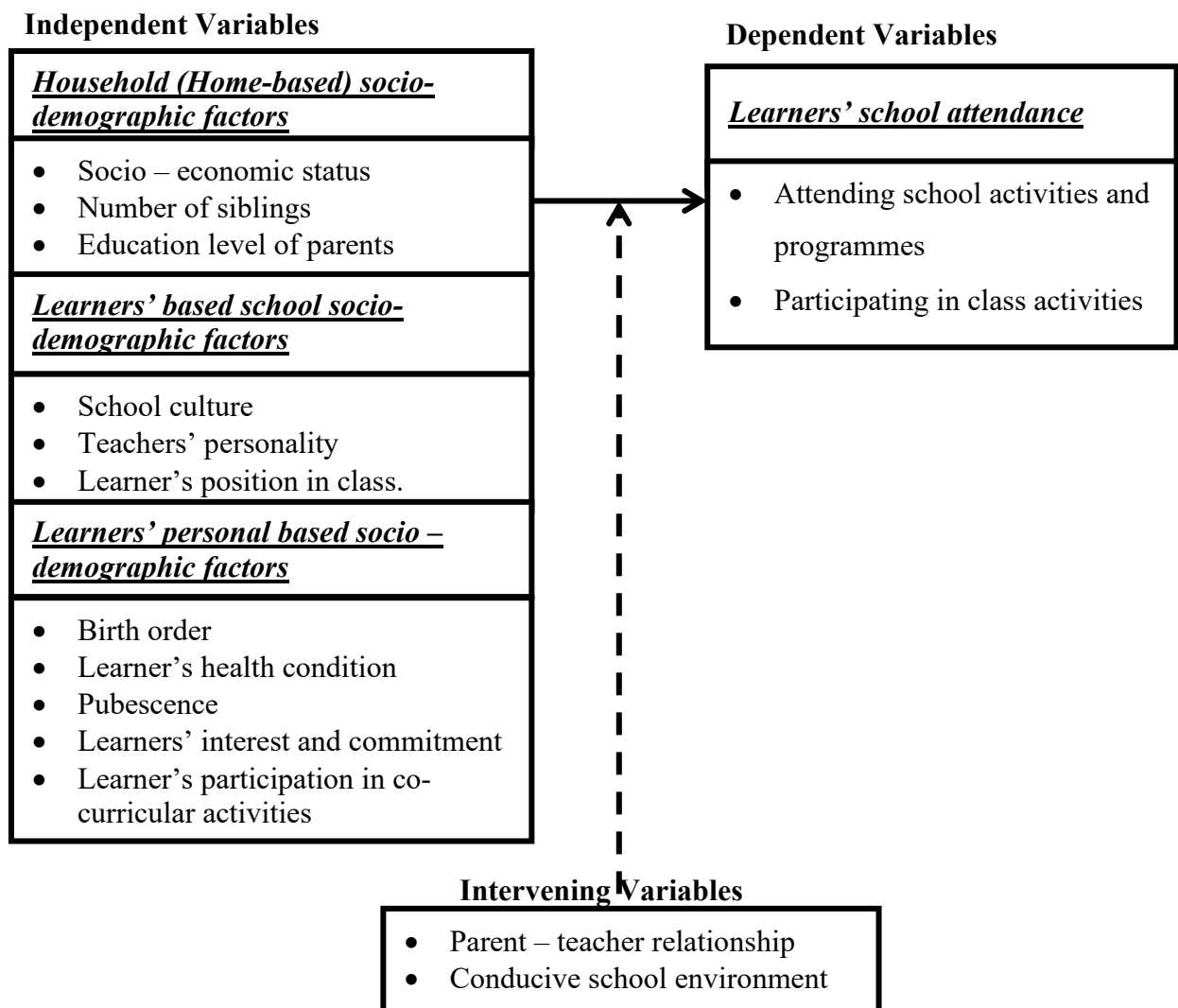
The findings of the study may bridge the epistemological gaps/knowledge gaps existing in the available literature on socio-demographic factors and learners' school attendance. So, future researchers may find the findings of the study useful because they may act as a reference.

**1.7 Justification of the study**

Earlier studies by Wangui (2013) and Tukumbukege & Yohana (2024) focused on learners' school attendance in rural settings in Tanzania and Northern Kenya, respectively. However, these studies did not examine the influence of socio-demographic factors on school attendance in urban environments, where such factors may significantly differ. Ezewu (2000) and Derville (2016) observed that home-based factors affecting learners in rural and urban settings vary considerably due to differences in socio-economic conditions, parental occupations, and urban family structures. Despite the expansion of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in Uganda, reports from the Masaka City Education Office (2024) indicate that learner attendance remains suboptimal, especially in government-aided schools. This trend raises concerns about its potential impact on educational outcomes. To address this gap, the current study seeks to examine how socio-demographic factors influence learners' school attendance in an urban context, using Masaka City as a case study.

**1.8 Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework is a set of broad ideas and principles taken from relevant fields of study or inquiry used in a structured way to present knowledge (Cossby, 2017; Cohen et-al, 2017). The variables which were involved in the study were conceptualized using the delineated model in Figure 1.8, illustrated below:



*Source: Adopted from [www.healthinformaticsjournal.com](http://www.healthinformaticsjournal.com) by Jyotsna (2024), modified by the researcher*

**Figure 1.8: The delineated model indicating the interrelationship among the independent, dependent, and intervening variables.**

In Figure 1.8 above, learners’ school attendance was looked at in terms of attending school activities and programmes regularly by the learner and participating in all activities and tasks given by the teachers. This was conceptualized to be influenced by the socio–demographic factors emanating from school. The Socio–Economic Status (SES), number of siblings, and education level of parents, school culture, teachers’ personality, and learners’ position in class seem to influence learners’ school attendance in both the short run and in the long run.

The learners' personal-based factors, like: learners' health condition, learners' interest and commitment, learners' participation in the co-curricular activities, and pubescence (human growth and development conditions) were also conceptualized to be influencing learners' school attendance in lower universal secondary schools. The inference here was that the learner, as the person studying personal conditions elaborated above, can either positively or negatively affect his/her school attendance. So data were collected on learners' home-based, learners' school-based, as well as learners' personal-based socio-demographic factors with an aim of understanding whether or not they influence school attendance in lower universal secondary schools. The intervening variables, for instance, parent-teacher relationship and the school environment came in to interplay between the independent and dependent variables to ascertain whether or not there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the two variables.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the previous discussions on the influence of socio–demographic factors on learners’ school attendance in lower universal secondary schools. The rationale behind reviewing previous studies was to identify knowledge gaps in the existing literature, and the present study was intended to bridge the epistemological gaps (Tullan, 2021).

#### 2.1 Theoretical review

The study was guided by McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y. This theory was advanced by Douglas McGregor in the 1960s. It is a management theory. McGregor distinguished between two entirely different and contradicting sets of motivational assumptions that can be held by managers. In this theory, what the manager holds is said to affect his/her strategies for motivating people (Bratton & Gold, 2018; Armstrong, 2016). Theory “X” assumes that people dislike work, that they avoid responsibility whenever possible, and that they seek safety and security above all else. And if they are to do a day’s work fairly, the supervisor should coerce them. On the contrary, in Theory “Y”, people do not dislike work or dislike it they can and do learn to accept and even seek out other responsibilities. Theory “Y”, then, has a much more positive view of human nature does Theory “X”. It therefore dictates that the role of the teacher, for example, at school is to provide an open and flexible school environment in which learners’ academic potential can be realized and to encourage participation whenever possible so learners can play an active role in determining their academic fates. In this way, learners motivated themselves to attend school rather than be motivated to attend school by external force (Farrant, 2007).

The implication of Theory “X” and Theory “Y” to the current study is that learners come from families of varying Socio–Economic Statuses (SES). The variations in the SES can either enhance or hinder students/learners’ school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City. So the understanding of socio–demographic factors and their influence on learners’ school attendance can be clearly explained and theorized on the assumptions of Murray McGregor’s Theory “X” and Theory “Y”. The school-based factors, like the teachers’ personality and the school culture, if they are not in the interests of the learners, they may

dislike the school, and the teacher ends up applying force (Coercing the learners to attend school). On the other hand, some learners are self-driven and can attend school without any coercion. Though this theory applies to the current study, it is not free from criticisms (Koontz & Weihrich, 2016). This theory (X and Y) is a fallacy because it generalizes people and tends to be so much inclined toward the assumptions of Theory “X”, which are negatively constructed. The fact remains that no student or learner would belong to either Theory “X” or Theory “Y”. The reality is that the learner shares the traits of both. Actually, when a learner happens then swings from one set of properties to the other, which changes in the socio–demographic factors in the changing home or school.

Recent studies integrate McGregor's framework with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000), emphasizing intrinsic motivation in attendance. SDT posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness drive engagement. In USE schools, learners from high-SES families often experience supportive environments that fulfill these needs, promoting attendance. Conversely, low-SES learners face barriers (e.g., resource scarcity) undermining motivation, aligning with Theory "X" dynamics (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This intersection highlights how socio-demographic factors interact with motivational theories to shape attendance behaviors.

## **2.2 Home–based characteristics and learners’ school attendance**

It is pointed out that individuals as well as families in society are differentiated and that the determining factors of such differentiation are the educational level, occupation, and income of the family. The socio–economic status of a family affects its attitudes and values in life (Adam–Issah et-el, 2007). It will be important for the teachers to recognize these differences among families and to understand how they interact with school education (Ezewu, 2000). The SES of the family influences learners’ school attendance. In high socio–economic status (HSES) families, children are usually prepared for school, especially at the primary school age, but they do not prepare for school on their own. They are encouraged to wake up early or are woken up early, or are woken up and prepared for school. The reasons for being late given show that the learners from low socio–economic status (LSES) homes where other activities in the home are valued more than schooling (Farrant, 2007). In such homes, learners are hardly encouraged to attend school regularly, and they do not have role models to emulate. Habitual absenteeism and regular late coming are likely to affect the school's academic achievement (Roby, 2013; Mboweni, 2014).

Research findings have shown that people of high socio-economic status send their children to school earlier than those of LSES. They have the means and opportunities of sending their children to nursery schools – as a transition from the home to the school – in most cases at the age of five rather than six, which the education policies stipulate and at which age children of parents of LSES enter school (Kumar et-al, 2024; Lawrence and Dawson, 2019). Observations in East Africa have shown that the prestigious and international schools are usually attended by children from HSES families. In this way, children from HSES families are likely to retain that status themselves and to pass it on to their offspring (Mbugua et-al, 2012; MoES, 2007). There have been many research findings that have indicated that the academic aspiration of the school learner is positively related to the SES of his or her parents. This is because children tend to imitate their parents and so aspire to be as highly educated as their parents. Such aspirations extrinsically and intrinsically motivate learners to attend school regularly, and they are likely to perform well (Mogale & Mode Pane, 2021). The Obanya and Ezewu studies showed that more learners from HSES families attended school regularly than those from LSES families (Wei, 2024; Ansari & Gottfried, 2021).

Demographic factors significantly influence school absenteeism, shaping the frequency and reasons to student absences. SES is a critical determinant with learners from LSES families. They are more likely to miss school due to financial and transportation barriers (Ali & Hayat, 2019; Huebener, Kuger & Marcus, 2017). Parental education also plays a role, as more educated parents tend to prioritize regular school attendance and value early learning opportunities (Fajriyah, 2023). Cultural factors and household dynamics further affect attendance, with single-parent households often facing more challenges in ensuring regular school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools (MoES, 2020). Geographic factors such as distance to school and availability of transport, also significantly influence learners' school attendance as well as absenteeism rates (Ohno, 2019; Kimani, Kara & Njagi, 2016). School attendance has become a more desirable activity for children and adolescents all over the world (UNESCO, 2020). Household-level characteristics that affect schooling include household size, household income, and education and gender of the head of the household (Amakuro, Robynne & Nsengiyumva, 2025).

Parents in rural areas may not prioritize formal education for their children since it is usually not required to access local employment opportunities (Yildiz, 2018). Parents' perceptions of potential future benefits of each learner's education influence their decision to invest in it.

Another argument is that educational facilities are more accessible and concentrated in urban areas than in rural areas (Nkanatha, 2018). This favours those learners living in urban environments to attend school more than those residing in rural-based schools.

However, it should be noted that the educational level of parents influences learners' school attendance. Parents with higher educational attainment inspire and encourage their children to achieve higher levels of education. Meanwhile, poorly educated parents do not place the same value on their children's education but have low expectations for them and will not motivate them as much to attend school and succeed academically (Mocanu et-al, 2021; World Bank, 2012). According to UNESCO (2020), household income also has a positive correlation with learners' attendance at school. The availability of resources in the home is a key factor in determining school attendance. In 2007, the government of Uganda launched universal secondary education (MoES, 2007), and parents were exempted from paying school fees, but parents have the responsibility of buying uniforms, books, and other things needed to support learners' education. Poor parents cannot afford to provide such requirements to their children. Poverty encourages child labour, which competes with school attendance because poor families cannot forfeit the immediate inflow of family revenue from child labour for the sake of educating their children (Muiru, 2018). Therefore, learners from rich households attend school more than those from poor households.

Studies by Kimani et-al (2016) and Viera et-al (2018) revealed that the financial burden of taking care of a large household can overwhelm parents to the point that they become unable to meet all school-aged members' educational needs. In this scenario, education investments are prioritized for the members that they can provide for. The likelihood of learners from large households attending school would thus be lower. Studies by Abdul-Rahaman and Wan (2025) and Amusa (2021) revealed that learners from female-headed households attend school more than their counterparts from male-headed households, thereby asserting that women are more committed to educating their children than men. Having recognized the socio-economic factors that affect school attendance, it is also important to acknowledge that institutional forces also affect more of the poor children than the high socio-economic status children (Chikoko & Mthembu, 2020). The way teachers treat learners, the teaching materials, and the teaching methods, the role of management in the school, greatly affect learners' school attendance.

It should be noted, however, given the challenges, low socio-economic status children at times achieve in school and eventually succeed. Also, some of the children from high socio-economic

status families, at times, drop out of school before reaching high levels (Bengesai, 2021). The socio-economic status of the family has been acknowledged to affect positively or negatively the schooling of the learners of that family. Children whose mothers had lower literacy levels were found to be more absent from school; absenteeism was about 56.3% (Jyostno et-al, 2021). This emphasizes the importance of maternal educational status for proper school attendance. Similar findings were noted in a study by Farah and Upadhyag (2017), who found that mothers of 52.6% of children who absented themselves or dropped out had not completed primary school level education (Kumar et-al, 2024). Children coming from poor families, living in slums with illiterate parents, are more likely to miss school because they do not have role models to emulate. According to Juliana, a tendency for high socio-economic status families to reproduce themselves and thus maintain the status quo. When this is the case, schooling does not appear to facilitate open competition and social mobility as it should.

Geographical factors, such as distance to school and transport access, further mediate home-based influences. Ohno (2019) found that Ugandan learners walking >5 km daily had 30% higher absenteeism. In Masaka City, rural-urban disparities exist: Nyendo-Mukungwe's clustered schools report better attendance than dispersed Kimaanya-Kabonera schools (City Education Report, 2024). Cultural norms also play a role; rural parents may prioritize agrarian skills over formal education, reducing attendance urgency (Yildiz, 2018). Additionally, digital divides during COVID-19 highlighted how low-SES households struggled with remote learning, widening attendance gaps (UNICEF, 2021). These layers underscore SES as a multidimensional determinant.

### **2.3 The influence of learners' school-based demographic factors on school attendance**

Farrant (2007) asserts that positive teacher-learner relationships have been linked to many learner outcomes like school attendance and performance. For lower secondary learners, negative teacher-learner relationships have been associated with lower scores on standardized tests, language, arts, and mathematics grades, less school engagement, increased classroom misbehaviour, high levels of aggression, social withdrawal, and absenteeism (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021; Wei, 2024; Juliana et-al, 2019). The quality of teacher-learner interactions and relationships impacts on learners' school attendance. Researchers like Wangui (2013), and Jyotsna et-al (2024) conducted studies on socio-demographic factors and school absenteeism in Kenyan and Indonesian schools, respectively, and the studies revealed that families' responsibilities and teacher-learner relationships were among the major factors causing truancy

among learners aged 8 – 12 years in secondary schools. It should be noted, however, irregular school attendance may be due to the interplay between several causes, and the current study will try to understand the underlying influence of the teacher–learner relationship on school attendance. The school culture is also believed to influence learners’ school attendance. School culture refers to the collection of values, beliefs, behaviours, customs, and attitudes that characterize a school.

School attendance has become a more desirable activity for learners all over the world (UNESCO, 2020). The global initiative to promote education for all can be traced to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. So, the understanding of the socio–demographic factors and learners’ school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Uganda, and particularly in Masaka City, is fundamental. Before the introduction of USE, students’ irregular attendance at school could be predominantly attributed to a lack of money to pay school fees on time (MoES, 2007). With this study, we extend knowledge to investigate the correlation between learners and the school-based characteristics with school attendance. The literature reviewed here provides a general review of socio–demographic factors affecting learners’ school attendance in lower USE schools in Masaka City.

The school rules and regulations are part of the school culture (Deri & Amika, 2020; Huebener et-al, 2017). The school’s culture plays a vital and fundamental role in its successes or failures. Therefore, school culture is the set of values, beliefs, behaviours, customs, and attitudes that help teachers, school administrators, and students of the school understand what it stands for, how the school does things, and what it considers important (Yildiz, 2018; Mairu, 2018; Farrant, 2007). It is worth noting that learners come from different home backgrounds, so the teachers and administrators must be ready to accommodate cultural diversity without compromising the school norms, rules, and regulations. But a different set of issues involving social culture also arises within the boundaries of the school. That is, when the learners comprising the school representing different cultural orientations in terms of values, beliefs, particularly religions, behaviors, customs, and attitudes pose unique opportunities and challenges for teachers and school administrators (Kumar & Krithika, 2024).

Earlier studies by Kimani, Kara, and Njagi (2016) and Wangui (2013), their findings showed that social culture and diversity were interrelated and influence learners’ school attendance. For example, the norms reflected in the school social culture can partially determine whether the school culture values the demographic differences among learners of varying religious beliefs.

The Constitution of Uganda of 1995 talks about freedom of worship (1995 Constitution), and many USE schools in Uganda are government aided with foundation bodies which Christian or Muslim based. Each foundation prioritizes its faith (MoES, 2010). Though schools must enroll students irrespective of sex, gender, race, or religion, it is apparent that in many USE schools, there is always one chapel for the faith of the foundation body, and schools end up forcing students to embrace religious norms of the religion cherished by the school (Masaba, Oola & Muhumuza, 2022). If the teachers are to effectively manage cultural diversity and enhance learners' school attendance in USE schools, they must be flexible and appreciate multiculturalism. But if they ignore cultural forces or even worse, attempt to circumvent or control them, then serious schools are most likely to experience serious problems related to misbehavior, aggression and truancy among others.

The school teachers and administrators need to have a clear understanding of how school culture, multiculturalism, and the related to the. In design, the school rules and regulations, the Boards of Governors (BoGs) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) should be conscious and design rules and regulations that are reasonable (Lemantongo & Nephath, 2011). The school culture is an amorphous concept that defies objective measurement or observation; nevertheless, because it is the foundation of the school's internal environment, it plays a cardinal role in boosting and shaping acceptable behaviour and can enhance students' discipline and attendance as well. The teachers and head teachers must understand the school rules and regulations and then decide if they should be maintained or revised. By understanding the school's culture, the teachers and administrators can take appropriate actions. But the teachers and administrators must walk on fine line between maintaining a school culture that still works effectively versus changing a school culture that has become dysfunctional. For this reason, therefore, McGregor's Theory "X" and Theory "Y", its assumptions should be critically studied, thereby enabling the teachers and head teachers to create a school environment where the students' voice can be heard instead of coercing them all the time (Armstrong, 2016). When the school culture is tailored to the assumptions of Theory "X", this is likely to accelerate absenteeism instead of lessening it.

The teachers' personality can positively influence, encourage, or discourage students from attending school (Derville, 2006; Fontana, 1995). The word personality refers to the individual's whole psychological makeup. It includes temperament, character, intelligence, sentiments, attitudes, interests, beliefs, ambitions, and ideals (Farrant, 2007). The teacher's personality is

shown by his dispositions and by how these dispositions are organized. As a rule, the teachers in the school setting represent authority. Therefore, according to the way in which the teachers use their authority, the learners will learn either to become obedient or deviant, to trust and respect authority, or to fear and hate. Teachers who are too authoritative may indirectly lead to low student turnout up especially when such teachers are on duty (Roby, 2013). Mocanu et-al (2021) and their associates observed that a teacher in charge of a class is often in a position to bring about either good or bad learners' school attendance. In a class in which learners are constantly ordered about, found fault with, compared with one another, and encouraged to tell tales on each other, will be one in which learners tend to become jealous of and unfriendly towards one another (Derville, 2008).

On the other hand, in a class where the teacher discussed plans with the learners, listens to their opinions, encourages the gifted learners to help the slow learners and arranges activities in such a way that each one has a chance to act sometimes as a leader and sometimes as a follower, the learners are likely to like the teacher and the school as well. In such circumstances, they will be able to learn and more willingly attend school regularly (Zhang et-al, 2021; Keppens, 2023). A stimulating school environment encourages school attendance, whereas a conducive school environment hinders learners' school attendance (Mboweni, 2014). Farrant (2007), Derville (2006), and Fontana (1995) observed that praise and rewards act as incentives to school attendance and learning, as they provide reinforcement and are direct results of success. The learner's evaluation of the reward is important. For instance, a timid learner lacking in self-confidence is reassured to a far greater degree by a word of praise than a self-sufficient learner. The learner's position in class can also affect school attendance. A learner who is always in the 1<sup>st</sup> position in the class is more likely to attend school than one who is in the last ten positions (Ali & Hayat, 2019).

Is reward more effective than punishment in reinforcing a given response? Experiments by Wei (2024) and Mbagua et-al (2012) showed that whenever punishment speeds up learning and deals with misbehavior instantly, it does so by forcing the learner to discard very quickly the responses or behaviours that lead to punishment and by making him more ready to accept responses or adopt behaviours that do not lead to punishment. Fontana (1995) asserted that, in principle, learners learn or adopt good behaviour more quickly when they are reinforced with a reward than when the wrong behaviour is followed by punishment. Teachers should refrain from administering corporal punishments because they discourage learners from attending

school (Farrant, 2007; MoES, 2020). As cited by Symonds in 1956, he declared that mild punishment was found to not affect learners' school attendance, the moderate punishment temporarily inhibited the learner's zeal to attend school and very severe or corporal punishments in some cases permanently affect the learner's ability to absorb and may lead to habitual absenteeism or dropping out of school (World, 2012).

The MoES abolished corporal punishments in schools (MoES, 2015). The ministry found out that corporal punishment not only prevents learners from attending school but also hinders their ability to learn. Punishment has the effect of preventing the learner from responding and thus destroys his/her self-esteem and the possibility to learn. The corporal punishments are mainly administered by teachers who are based on the assumptions of Theory "X". For them, they have a belief that learners have to be coerced if they are to comply with school authority (Braton and Cold, 2018). A punished learner is not only damaged in his learning capacity; he also has his attention diverted by the punishment from the subject to be learned to the subject of his relations with the teacher. By making the student anxious, punishment loses its educational function, although it may have some value as a means of control (Msafiri & Lianyu, 2022).

Fontana (1995) observed that it is useful for individual teachers to closely look at the strategies that they develop for unnecessarily asserting their status to the learners. Ignoring students' legitimate requests for attention or information, rude comments on learners' opinions or responses, demeaning names and expressions, lack of feeling of sympathy or empathy, sign of a teacher asserting status over a learner (Kwegyiriba, 2021; Khobe & Mukuna, 2023). However, it should be noted that it should not be taken for granted by the learners. Similarly, the school administration and management should look at its management structure and see whether there is unnecessary hierarchy and status operating between learners and the teaching staff (Amakuro, et-al, 2025). The hierarchical challenges may hinder learners' school attendance in USE schools. The head teacher's leadership style may also affect learners' school attendance. Some head teachers tend not to involve teachers in decision-making and end up doing what pleases them. Teachers who consider they have no way of making their views heard on the way the school should be run or managed, and working on orders from the head teacher, may end up doing the mere minimum when it comes to enforcing school discipline (Koontz & Weirich, 2016)

Derville (2006) states that it might, however, be the case that the school teacher, through treating the learners unjustly or unkindly, has caused the learners to hate or dislike him. If this

happens, the learners will probably begin to absent themselves or start to attend school regularly. They will automatically dislike the subject(s) he/she teaches, and this may also result in learners becoming backward (Farrant, 2007). The learner's negative attitude makes it hard for him or her to concentrate. But in many cases, it is not the learner's present teacher who is to blame; the fault lies with those who have taught the learner in the past. As a result of bad teaching and cruel treatment at the beginning of his/her school career, a learner may fail to like the school or fail to master the basics of reading and arithmetic, and this failure in learning these basic skills will hold back his progress in other subjects. The backwardness in school academic achievement can possibly be the root cause of irregular attendance at school (Fontana, 1995). Most cases of backwardness are due, not to one single cause, but to a number of causes. Therefore, if we find that a backward learner has poor health, an unfavourable parental attitude, or when there is disharmony in the home. There is a lot of association between unhappiness in the home and backwardness at school (Khobe & Mukuma, 2023; OECD, 2018; Shehu, 2018; Amusa, 2021).

Infrastructure quality is critical. A 2024 Ugandan study revealed that schools lacking sanitation facilities (e.g., girls' sanitary pads, clean water) had 25% higher female absenteeism (Nalwanga et al., 2024). Teacher quality and retention also play roles; under-resourced USE schools face high teacher turnover, disrupting student consistency (World Bank, 2023). Furthermore, safety concerns—such as bullying or inadequate fencing—deter attendance. In Tanzania, SEDP schools addressing safety saw absenteeism drop by 15% (Kanukisya, 2022). These factors illustrate how institutional policies must evolve to address socio-demographic realities.

#### **2.4 The influence of learners' personal-based socio–demographic factors on school attendance**

Within lower universal secondary schools, learners exhibit variations in demographic characteristics encompassing differences in learners' based socio – demographic factors, and all these variations affect their school attendance significantly (Nkanatha, 2018). School absenteeism stands as a pressing concern in many USE schools in Uganda (MoES, 2019). It denotes habitual or chronic non – non-attendance of learners in educational settings (Farrant, 2007). It encompasses both justified and unjustified absences and is typically quantified by the number of weeks, terms, or years. It is an indicator of school dropout, which can lead to various social, economic, and health challenges in adulthood (Keppens, 2023; Kinani et-al, 2016).

Kumar, Krithika, Maheswari, and Jyostna (2024) conducted on clinical and socio–demographic factors affecting school absenteeism among children aged 8 – 12 years in Chennai, India, and they found that child–intrinsic characteristics, which included information related to the learner’s physical and mental health, greatly affect learners’ school attendance. The indicators studied were the common medical problems due to the child’s absence from school, school academic achievements, whether the learner enjoys school, or whether the child is punished at school (Kumar et-al, 2024).

According to Derville (2007) and Fontana (2006), the learner’s general health conditions affect school attendance. A learner whose general health is poor often misses school because such a learner lacks the normal amount of energy that is necessary to go to school on a daily basis and such a learner can hardly concentrate during the teaching – learning process. Learners who have a poor record of school attendance are likely to fall behind. According to Ansari and Gottfried (2021), a background learner is one whose standards of work fall below those reached by the majority of his/her age group. But, if the learner who has missed school due to severe illness and is of normal intelligence, this backwardness need will not necessarily be lasting. Provided that he/she does not return to school until he/she has completely recovered, there is a good chance that with a little help learner may easily cope.

Student factors are a result of students’ self-will. Learners’ demographics may influence school attendance (Deri & Amika, 2020). Research by Bwomeni (2014) demonstrated that truancy increased with rank as learners’ progress and most habitually occurs at the age of 15 years and below. The influence of adolescence and pubescent influences school attendance (Ohno, 2019). Truant students often do not feel safe at school. They always feel academically or socially insufficient. They consider school attendance to be exhausting, and their positive encounters at school are not as much as for the individuals or learners who go to class constantly (Julian et-al, 2019). They feel feeble at school and prefer to be absent.

In a study conducted by Shehu (2018) in North West Nigeria, the findings revealed that the firstborn children were found to be missing school regularly. The studies correlating birth order with school attendance are ambivalent. Studies suggest that firstborns or elder children are more likely to miss school citing reasons like elder siblings staying back at home to take care for their younger siblings and sick family members; older children also contribute to household income (Bengesa et-al, 2021). On the other hand, some studies say that younger children in the family are more likely to miss school because parents find it difficult to take care of all kids at the same

time effectively middle order children receive less attention from parents and are more prone to truancy (Bwomeni, 2014).

The importance of learner engagement in co – co-curricular activities at school is cognized by educators as one of the aspects that can enhance school attendance (Adam–Issah et, 2007; Ali & Hayat, 2019). Learners who fail to participate in co-curricular activities may gradually withdraw from school activities, and in some cases, participate in disruptive behaviour and display a negative attitude towards the teacher and other learners. Participation in co-curricular activities by learners is likely to enhance school attendance (Wangui, 2013). One of the most important things learners are likely learned through play is how to form and maintain relationships with others (Deri & Amika, 2020). A learner who peers has an interest in co-curricular activities, is likely to attend school regularly, and be able to meet his/her peers during play time after class lessons (Fontana, 2018). Co-curricular activities offer teachers a wonderful opportunity to engage fully with the learners, and this enhances school attendance. In many schools, many learners are given less free time to engage in co-curricular activities (Wei, 2024; Muiru, 2018).

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Pubescence in young girls begins at around eleven years of age, and in young boys it commences at around thirteen years of age (Lematongo & Nephath, 2021), this beginning of a new stage in life may contribute to school absenteeism (Yldiz, 2018). This is because the young learners begin to experience extreme times in which they attempt to be autonomous and discover their characters. The capability of the learners to carry out wrongdoing, depending on viciousness, partaking in the posse exercises, drug and substance abuse are comparatively

higher in this period due to peer group influence (Macanu, Marariu & Munteanu, 2021). If the learner cannot find a role model at home, in the community, or at school during this period, which constitutes the defining moment of his/her life, it may create unwillingness to attend school regularly, and this, therefore, influences school participation among learners in lower universal secondary schools.

To enhance learners' retention and attendance in USE schools, teachers need to understand students' expectations. The assumption underlying the expectancy theory is that students operate on the gain–cost principle (Farrant, 2007; Derville, 2006). The teachers must ensure that what they teach is related to the students' needs, and the school environment must be conducive to facilitating learning. In USE schools, learners exhibit variation in demographic characteristics encompassing age differences, educational levels, as well as varied educational and occupational status of their parents or guardians. The introduction of USE in Uganda in 2007 aimed at improving access, enhancing equity, retention, and school completion levels (MoES, 2007). To increase access to secondary education was facilitated by the abolition of fees that students used to pay in order to access secondary education facilitated. Before the introduction of USE, secondary education was for the privileged few children from High socioeconomic Status families who could afford to pay fees. So USE programme was designed to improve learners' school attendance as well as students' retention.

In a study conducted in Turkey by Yildiz (2018), the results showed that the learners' home conditions, school-based factors, and the learners' health condition greatly influence the learners' school attendance, school achievement, as well as the educational aspirations of such a child. Various studies by scholars like Nkanatha (2018) and Mogale (2021) showed that learners' irregular attendance at school negatively affects their academic achievement.

Learners always engage in behaviours that satisfy their ego needs, success, mastery, and self-actualization. School tasks which do not lead to the fulfillment of those goals are non – non-motivating and will be carried out with a lack of interest and enthusiasm (Koontz and Weirich, 2016). The teachers should be able to guide, counsel, and help students to appreciate the justification behind regular attendance at school.

The USE programme has registered remarkable successes, like increased enrolment. The number of schools under USE has almost tripled since its introduction in 2007 (MoES, 2015). The programme started with 363 schools and 42,000 students, and by 2013, 879 schools were

implementing the USE programme with 806,992 students. One of the most significant benefits of USE has been the increase in enrolment of girls from economically weak families (low socio-economic status families) in secondary schools that previously would have dropped out due to prevailing gender bias and poverty. So, there is a need to empower families and get help to move from low socio-economic status families (LSES) to high socio-economic status families (HSES). So, the government programmes like the Parish Development Model (PDM) were launched by the Government of Uganda to uplift families economically and be able to provide needs to their families. Learners' school attendance can be enhanced when the teacher-parent relationship is enhanced. This can be through a PTA meeting; parents should get actively involved in the school activities and programmes. With such intensified cooperation, parents can easily make a follow-up on children's school attendance.

Gender-specific challenges are pronounced. Pubescent girls miss 3–5 school days monthly due to menstrual poverty (Jyotsna et al., 2024). Uganda's 2023 Menstrual Health Management Policy improved provisions, but implementation gaps persist. Cognitive factors, like learning disabilities, also contribute. Undiagnosed dyslexia or ADHD leads to frustration and avoidance (UNESCO, 2022). Additionally, peer networks shape attendance; students in aspirational peer groups exhibit 95% attendance versus 70% in disengaged cohorts (Zhang et al., 2021). These insights necessitate holistic support systems addressing biological, psychological, and social dimensions.

## **2.5 Knowledge, methodological, and contextual gaps emerging from literature review**

Studies by Tukumbukege and Yohana (2024) and Deri and Wardana (2020) revealed that socio-demographic factors significantly contributed to increased students' school enrolment and improved academic performance. They found out that socio-demographic characteristics like the birth order of children, gender, family size, education level of parents, and socio-economic status in terms of income of the parents had a positive correlation with school achievement. So, this study seeks to investigate the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on learners' school attendance in lower universal secondary schools. The current study is intended to bridge the knowledge gap. At the inception of universal secondary education (USE) and its operationalization in 2007, there has been drastic increase in enrolment because secondary education, more accessible and affordable. But learners' school attendance has remained a big challenge (MoES, 2022).

The reviewed literature has shown that most parents who take children to USE schools are mainly those with low incomes and those with low levels of education, and some cannot afford to buy scholastic materials and school uniforms for their children (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2018). The greatest challenge facing USE schools when it comes to students or learners' attendance is that USE schools are meant to be a day school according to the government policy. So, the socio-demographic factors greatly influence learners' school attendance. The reviewed literature has shown that socio-demographic variables affect schooling among school students in Uganda (MoES, 2022).

Earlier studies by Nsengiyumvu and Amakuro (2025) and Tukumbukege and Yohana (2024) used cross-sectional survey designs because they aimed at establishing the correlation or relationship between socio-demographic factors and students' academic performance. The foregoing studies were guided by the Post-positivist paradigm, which asserts that universal truth and objectivity can be realized through scientific approaches that are testable, validated, and measurable (Fullan, 2021; Cossby, 2017 & Cohen et-al, 2017). In their studies, quantitative approaches were employed because the probable relationships are ascertained with such methods. In the current study, the researcher intends to use qualitative research approaches, and the study will be purely qualitative. The researcher will use a qualitative research design and the interpretivism paradigm. This paradigm asserts that reality can be interpreted differently by people. People have varied interpretations on the influence of socio-demographic factors on learners' attendance epistemologically, interpretivism views knowledge and truth depending on personal judgments.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Different scholars view learners' school attendance in different ways. Scholars like Adam – Issah et-al (2007), Yilzid (2018) and Fajriyah (2023) view learners' school attendance in term of years and in terms of number of days (frequency) a learner attends school a week, month, term or year and in terms of learner's participation or engagement in lesson and other school programmes. Keppens (2023) further adds that learners' attendance is frequently used to depict learners' willingness to attend school and participation in the school routine activities such as attending classes and lessons, submitting the required areas of integration, and following teachers' instructions during the teaching - learning process (Farrant, 2007). The rationale behind universalization of secondary education was to enable all children of school-going age to enroll and remain in school till completion. Socio-demographic factors have an influence on

learners' school attendance in USE schools.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the methods and the methodology used during the study. It is divided into the following sections: research design, population, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection methods and instruments, quality control methods, procedure of data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and delimitations.

#### 3.1 Research design

According to Gibbs (2021), a research design is an arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data. The researcher used a descriptive survey design. This design is appropriate because it enabled the researchers to collect and analyze qualitative data in a short period. The design enabled the researcher to gain insights into how socio–demographic factors influence learners’ school attendance (Collins, 2018). This design also helped the researcher to observe the subjects, that is, learners, in a natural setting, thus helping the researcher to generalize the findings from the target population to the wider population. It helped the researcher to collect relevant data in a relatively short period. And scholars like Wangusa (2013) and Tukumbugeke and Yohana (2024) conducted their studies using a descriptive survey design. The study was guided by the post-positivist paradigm. This paradigm asserts that the truth and reality can only be achieved through scientific methods that are testable, validated, and refutable (Amin, 2015). Epistemologically, post-positivism views knowledge as statements, beliefs, or facts that can be empirically tested, confirmed, verified, or disproved (Cohen, 2018).

#### 3.2 Population

The population of the study included: the universal secondary school found Masaka City, teachers, head teachers, students, and parents. The five categories of the study population were selected because the study on socio–demographic factors and their influence on learners’ school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City was purposively selected, that is, only government-aided USE schools were selected for the study. How big was the population? State numbers

### 3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for teachers, learners, and parents/guardians was determined using simple random, snowball, and purposive sampling techniques.

**Table 3.1: Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

Category	Population	Sample size	Sample techniques
Teachers	127	83	Simple Random Sampling
Learners	5000	357	Simple Random Sampling
Head teachers	05	05	Purposive sampling
Deputy head teachers	05	05	Purposive sampling
Parents/guardians	500	217	Snowball sampling
USE schools	05	05	Purposive sampling
TOTAL	?	?	

*Source: Primary Data (2025)*

Masaka City has 5 USE schools, which are unevenly distributed in the two divisions of the city. They were all government-aided, and the majority of the students are day scholars, and boarding is optional, mainly for the candidate class, only for parents who can afford to pay boarding fees, which were passed by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and approved by the Board of Governors (BoGs). All five USE schools were considered for the study, and both sexes were part of the study. This was done to avoid biased stereotypes and prejudice from one sex. Learners and academic staff were selected using simple random sampling. This sampling technique gave an equal chance to subjects in the accessible population to participate in the study (Leedy, 2019). The parents/guardians and headteachers and their deputies were selected using snowball and purposive sampling techniques, respectively. Only participants who served the purpose of the study were selected. The researcher targeted lower secondary students who study under the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC). This curriculum emphasizes making learning more practical. What learners learn theoretically, they are given areas of integration

tasks the researcher wishes to find out how socio-based factors influence learners' school attendance.

### **3.4 Data Collection Methods**

#### **3.4.1 Questionnaire**

What is a questionnaire method? The researcher designed questions based on the three research objectives to elicit data from the respondents. Each respondent, particularly head teachers, deputy head teachers, and teachers, was given a questionnaire to fill. This method was preferred because this category of respondents can read and comprehend the question items on the questionnaire form and give their responses in writing (Amin, 2015).

#### **3.4.2 Interviews**

According to Tullan (2021), an interview is a face-to-face interaction between the interviewee and the researcher (interviewer). The researcher held face-to-face oral interviews with respondents, that is, ordinary level students as well as parents. The rationale of using this method is based on the premise that the majority of the parents may not be able to read and comprehend a questionnaire written in English. Another justification why this method of data collection was opted for because the facial and entire body language of the respondents helped the researcher to gain deeper insights into how socio-demographic factors can affect learners' school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City (Tullan, 2021).

### **3.5 Sources of Data**

#### **3.5.1 Primary Data**

Primary data is information gathered directly from respondents (Cohen et-al, 2017; Cossby, 2017). Primary data were collected using questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions, and observation. The researcher scrutinized class registers and found that 7 – 11% of the learners in most of the sampled schools could be absent every day. The collection of primary data involved creating or generating new data.

#### **3.5.2 Secondary Data**

The researcher collected and analyzed published data. Secondary data were collected from class registers to track attendance of pupils, reports from class teachers to the head teachers..... The

researcher described, summarized, classified, and synthesized data according to the objectives of the study.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaire Form**

Questionnaires are self-printed forms designed to elicit data from respondents. The questionnaire forms were administered to head teachers, deputies, and teachers. The questionnaire contained open-ended, closed-ended, and Likert-scaled question items. It was designed in such a way that it addresses the demographic characteristics of the respondents in section A and also addressed the verification of the variables in section B, C and D. A likert scale from 5 – 1, that is, **Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1** used on statements concerning the influence of socio – demographic factors and learners’ school in lower USE schools. The scaled (Likert-scaled) question items enabled the researcher to make a fair assessment of the respondents’ views and opinions (Kothari, 2016). The questionnaire forms were preferred because they enabled the researcher to collect enough data from many respondents within a short period of time, and secondly, they also provided a record of the elicited responses, and such a record can be kept for future reference (Cossby, 2017; Gibbs, 2021).

#### **3.6.2 Interview Guide**

An interview guide is a research instrument that guides the researcher during interviews (Cohen et-al, 2017). This research instrument was used to collect data from parents and students. The interview guide was designed based on the specific research objectives of the study. The researcher kept on probing respondents depending on how the in-depth interviews were flowing (Mamdan, 2018). The interviews were justified on three counts: first, most of the parents and guardians are either illiterate or semi-literate, and it may be difficult for them to read and comprehend the contents of the questionnaire. Secondly, interviews enhanced flexibility and the facial expressions, as well as the entire body language, helped the researcher to get deep insights into the subject matter on socio–demographic factors and their influence on school attendance in selected Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City.

### **3.6.3 Focus Group Discussion Guide**

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were employed to gather in-depth qualitative data on participants' shared experiences and perceptions related to the study objectives. In total, 60 learners per school, FGDs were conducted. Each group comprised between 8 and 10 participants, a size considered manageable for meaningful interaction while allowing each participant ample opportunity to contribute. Participants were purposively selected based on their relevance to the study problem, specifically, individuals with direct experience or knowledge of the issues under investigation. Efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of gender, age, and socio-economic background, in order to capture a broad range of perspectives.

The discussions were moderated by the researcher, who followed a semi-structured approach guided by a Focus Group Discussion Guide. This guide was developed to mirror the content of the interview guide and was organised according to the study's specific objectives, as recommended by Cossby (2017). Open-ended questions allowed for flexibility in discussion, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences and clarify their views.

Each FGD session lasted approximately 15-20 minutes were used and was conducted in a quiet, neutral setting to minimise distractions and encourage free expression. The researcher facilitated the discussions by ensuring that all participants had a chance to speak, managing dominant voices, and probing for further clarification where necessary. Responses were documented in two ways: (1) detailed note-taking by an assistant moderator, and (2) audio recording of the entire discussion, with participants' consent, to ensure accuracy during transcription and analysis.

The combination of careful participant selection, skilled moderation, and systematic recording ensured that the FGDs produced rich, relevant, and reliable qualitative data, which was later coded and analysed thematically alongside interview and questionnaire data.

## **3.7 Quality control methods**

### **3.7.1 Validity**

According to Amin (2015), validity is the ability to produce findings that are in agreement with theoretical and conceptual values, that is, to produce accurate results and measure what is

supposed to be measured. Content validity, thus, refers to the degree to which a test actually measures or is specifically related to the traits for which it is designed. The Context Validity Index (CVI) was established using the formula below:

$$\text{CVI} = \frac{\text{Number of relevant question items}}{\text{Total number of question items in the questionnaire}}$$

The CVI of the research instruments was computed by three research experts and their values were as follows:

$$\text{Expert A} : \frac{69}{71} = 0.97$$

$$\text{Expert B} : \frac{67}{71} = 0.94$$

$$\text{Expert C} : \frac{69}{71} = 0.97$$

$$\left( \frac{A 0.97 + B 0.94 + C 0.97}{3} \right)$$

$$\frac{2.88}{3} = 0.96$$

The CVI was 0.96. The research instrument was valid. According to Cohen, Manion, and Keith (2017), the values closer to 1 mean higher content validity. Thus, the research tools were valid, and this enabled the researcher to elicit the required data on the variables as depicted by the research objectives thematically.

### 3.7.2 Reliability

According to Cohen et-al (2017), the reliability of an instrument refers to the consistency of the results. It also refers to the dependability of an instrument in measuring what it is supposed to measure. A reliable instrument produces the same results whenever it is repeatedly used, as characterized by precision and objectivity. In computing reliability, the questionnaire form item was divided into two parts in terms of odd and even numbers. The scores to be obtained in odd items (X) were correlated with the scores to be obtained in even items (Y). The Pearson

correlation co-efficient formula was used to calculate the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient as shown below:

$$\alpha = \frac{(k) Sy^2 - \sum Si^2}{(k - 1) Sy^2}$$

Where:

$\alpha$  = Cronbach's Alpha

$k$  = the number of items in the scale

$Si$  = the sum of the item scores for each item

$S$  = the sum of the total scores for the items

The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the questionnaire form was 0.96; therefore, the internal consistency was both valid and reliable as well.

### **3.8 Procedure of data collection**

The researcher got an introductory letter from the Faculty of Education of Uganda Martyrs University. This letter was used to seek permission and consent from the head teachers and respondents. Appointments with the various respondents were made. The research assistant helped the researcher distribute questionnaires to respondents. Face-to-face interviews were organized by the researcher by making appointments with the respondents. After the collection of data, it was analyzed, interpreted, and finally compiled into a draft dissertation to be presented to the School of Postgraduate and Research to be marked before sending it to the External Examiner(s).

### **3.9 Data analysis**

The analysis combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to reflect the mixed nature of the data collected. Quantitative data from the closed-ended questions in the questionnaires were entered into SPSS (Version 29.1) for analysis. Before entry, a coding framework was developed to translate responses into numerical form. Categorical variables such as gender, marital status, education level, and occupation were assigned specific numerical codes, while continuous variables such as age and years of work experience were entered as numeric values.

The analysis focused on descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, to summarise the respondents' characteristics and identify notable trends. These descriptive results were later presented in tables and narrative form to support the interpretation of the findings.

The qualitative data, obtained mainly from open-ended questionnaire responses and interviews, were analysed using thematic analysis. This process began with careful reading of all responses to become familiar with the content, followed by systematic coding of statements related to the study objectives. Similar codes were then grouped into broader categories, which were further refined into key themes. These themes, such as *home-based factors*, *school-based factors*, and *personal factors*, provided the framework for presenting the qualitative findings.

In the results, the quantitative summaries (e.g., proportions of respondents citing particular challenges) are integrated with qualitative extracts to give context and depth to the statistical patterns. This approach allowed the study to present not only the prevalence of certain views or experiences but also the explanations and perspectives behind them. By merging these two strands of analysis, the findings offer a comprehensive understanding of the factors under investigation.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

The researcher sought permission and consent from head teachers and all participants. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis. The identity and names of respondents were kept anonymous in order to avoid bias and prejudice of the respondents, and the information provided was treated with utmost confidentiality. This made the respondents secure. In addition, the researcher acted honestly, fairly, and respectfully throughout the study, and the information to be elicited from respondents was presented in aggregate. The researcher strictly followed the research guidelines as put forward by Uganda Martyrs University. This ensured that there was no form of plagiarism whatsoever. The researcher acknowledged all sources of secondary data cited throughout the dissertation as substantiated by the references at the back of the report. This was intended to avoid plagiarism and to stick to the conventionally acceptable procedures of conducting research (Gibbs, 2021).

### **3.11 Limitations**

The researcher had to meet parents and guardians from the homes. The researcher incurred a lot of transport costs to have access to the parents and guardians who were scattered in the two

administrative divisions of Masaka. In some cases, the researcher had to make new appointments with the respondents in case the first appointment flopped. As a result of the first missed appointments, this delayed the collection, analysis, interpretation of data, and the final compiling of the dissertation. The data elicited from respondents were self-reported. Therefore, the conclusions of the study are as trustworthy as the respondents who provided it. However, pertinent responses may have been left out, or others could have exaggerated.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the response rate, household characteristics, learners' school characteristics, and learners' socio-demographic factors on learners' school attendance in selected Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City.

#### 4.1 Respondents' Response Rate

**Table 4.1: Respondents' response rate**

Category	Sample Population	Response	Response Rate in (%)
Head teachers and deputies	10	06	60.0
Teachers	127	65	51.18
Students	357	300	84.0
Parents and guardians	217	120	55.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>491</b>	

*Source: Primary Data, 2025*

The results in Table 4.1 above, 60% of the sampled head teachers and their deputies participated in the study. Sixty-five (65.3%) of the teachers, eighty-four (84.0%), and 55.2% of the parents and guardians participated in the study. They had made appointments with parents and guardians, but out of 217 who were targeted, only 120 parents participated in the study. The response rate for parents and guardians was 55.2%. Since the turnout of parents and guardians was more than 50%, the researcher generalized the research outcome to be authentic. Table 4.1 above revealed that out of the sampled parents/guardians, only 55.2% participated in face-to-face interviews organized by the researcher. More than 40% of the respondents in this category did not participate in the study (44.8%). The overall response rate was 69%. According to Tullan (2021), a response rate above 65% is considered reasonable enough for statistical inferences.

## 4.2 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Background information was collected about respondents' gender, highest level of education, work experience, age bracket, and marital status, among others. Such information was based on the premise that such variables could influence the respondents' knowledge and perception of socio-demographic factors and learners' school attendance. The inference being that such variables may be useful in understanding the data they provided on the variables of primary interest. The findings on the background variables are summarized.

**Table 4.2: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Category of respondents	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Head teachers and deputies	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	04	66.6
	Female	02	33.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>99.9</b>
Teachers	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	41	63.0
	Female	24	36.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>99.9</b>
Parents and guardians	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	46	38.3
	Female	74	61.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>99.9</b>

Students	<b>Gender</b>		
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	Male	130	43.3
	Female	170	56.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>99.9</b>
Head teachers and deputies	<b>Highest Academic Qualification</b>		
	Diploma (DES)	00	00
	Bachelors	02	33.3
	Master's Degree	02	33.3
	PGDE	02	33.3
	PhD	00	00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>99.9</b>
Teachers	<b>Highest Academic Qualification</b>		
	Diploma (DES)	13	20.0
	Bachelors	48	73.8
	Master's Degree	04	06.1
	PhD	00	00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Parents and guardians	<b>Level of Education</b>		
	Primary	71	59.1
	Illiterate	04	3.3
	Secondary	26	21.6
	Tertiary	19	15.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>99.8</b>
Students	<b>Level of Education</b>		
	S.1 – S.4	300	100.0

	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>
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Head teachers and deputies	<b>Work experience</b>		
	0 – 9	01	16.6
	10 – 19	01	16.6
	20 – 29	03	49.8
	30 – 39	01	16.6
	40 years and above	00	00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Teachers	<b>Work experience</b>		
	0 – 9	19	29.23
	10 – 19	25	38.46
	20 – 29	12	18.46
	30 – 39	07	10.76
	40 years and above	02	3.07
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Head teachers and deputies	<b>Age bracket</b>		
	20 – 29	00	00
	30 – 39	02	33.3
	40 – 49	02	33.3
	50 years and above	02	33.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Teachers	<b>Age bracket</b>		
	20 – 29	12	18.46

	30 – 39	34	52.30
	40 – 49	10	15.38
	50 years and above	09	13.84
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Students	<b>Age bracket</b>		
	10 – 14	19	6.33
	15 – 19	264	88.0
	20 years and above	17	5.66
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Parents & Guardians	<b>Age bracket</b>		
	25 – 34	06	5.0
	35 – 44	07	5.8
	45 – 54	07	5.8
	55 – 64	47	39.1
	65 - 74	39	32.5
	85 years and above	14	11.66
	<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Head teachers and Deputies	<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Married	05	83.4
	Single	01	16.6
	Separated/Divorced	00	00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Teachers	<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Married	48	73.84

	Single	15	23.07
	Separated/Divorced	02	3.07
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Parents and guardians	<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Married	57	47.5
	Single	24	20.0
	Separated/Divorced	39	32.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Primary Data, 2025*

Table 4.2 shows that a total of 491 respondents' demographic characteristics are summarized. This can be substantiated by making a reference to Table 4.1, which gives the respondents' response rate. The background information was elicited from head teachers, deputies, teachers, students, and parents or guardians. The rationale behind the inclusion of both male and female respondents was that it is universally believed that males and females have different inclinations or perceptions on different things. In order to have a balanced study in terms of respondents' views and opinions, both sexes/genders were purposively included in the study. This helped the researcher to minimize prejudice and bias, which could emerge if only one gender had been considered for the study socio socio-demographic factors, and learners' school attendance in USE schools found in Masaka City.

The results in Table 4.2 revealed that, considering all the categories of respondents, 221 were male (45.0%) and 270 respondents were female (54.9%). Though female respondents were the majority (54.9%) and male respondents were a minority (45.01%), the range was less than 5%. All the samples happened to have more females than males. So the findings of the study can be generalized to be authentic because both sexes were part of the study. Teachers, deputies, and head teachers had valid work experience. It is believed that someone's work experience can considerably bring variations in responses because it is believed that the higher someone's work experience, the way they perceive things may be different from those whose work experience is not significantly extensive.

Table 4.2 also shows that only 37.4% of the respondents had attained secondary and tertiary education ( $21.6 + 15.8 = 34.7\%$ ), and the majority were either illiterate (3.3%) or had attained primary education (59.1%) ( $3.3 + 59.1 = 62.4\%$ ). With a low level of education among parents and guardians, the household (home-based) socio – like socio – economic status, number of siblings, and education level of parents were believed to have a great influence on learners' school attendance. On marital status, the majority of the respondents from the categories of head teachers, deputies, teachers, and parents were married, represented by  $\frac{110}{491}$  (57.5%), the singles, divorced, and separated were only 42.5%. The students in the study were represented by  $\frac{300}{491}$  (61.09%). This was because they had the biggest population compared to other categories of the population, which was deemed fit for the study on socio–demographic factors and learners' school attendance.

During the study, findings revealed that parents who were married and had attained secondary or tertiary education, whose children were attending USE schools, their school attendance was reasonably commendable. Most of the irregular attendees were from homes where parents were either single mothers/single fathers with little economic means or with Low Socio–Economic Status (LSES) families. This implies that single parents have too many financial burdens, and at times they may fail to meet school requirements on time and which may affect school attendance.

### **4.3 Findings on household characteristics and learners' school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools.**

#### **4.3.1 Teachers, deputies, and head teachers' responses**

To understand teachers, deputies, and head teachers' perceptions of the influence of household (home-based factors) characteristics on learners' school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City. The respondents' responses varied considerably. The respondents' responses revealed that to a greater extent, home-based factors like the number of siblings, parents' socio–economic status, as well as parents' level of education can either encourage or discourage learners from attending school regularly. The findings revealed that if the parent has a negative attitude towards universalization of secondary education, this attitude can hinder learners' attendance at school (76%). It was only 24% who did not see any correlation between parents' level of education and learners' school attendance. This means that the respondents'

responses heavily depended on their perceptions as well as their varied backgrounds. According to the results in Table 4.3, the respondents 73.30% agreed that the parents' level of education directly influences learners' school attendance. Therefore, the result seems to affirm that household characteristics contribute to learners' school attendance. Learners from HSES families always have enough time to test because the environment is conducive, and this was found to be correlated with school attendance.

**Table 4.3: Teachers, deputies, and head teachers' responses on the influence of home-based factors (household characteristics) on learners' school attendance**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>
	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	
Parents' education level influences learners' school attendance	21 (29.5)	31 (43.6)	16 (22.5)	3 (4.2)	0 0	3.77
The parents' occupation has a direct bearing on learners' school attendance	23 (32.3)	31 (43.6)	13 (18.3)	43 (2.4)	0 0	3.77
Learners from high socio-economic status families attend school regularly	26 (36.6)	23 (32.4)	12 (22.5)	6 (8.5)	0 0	3.87
Learners from low socio-economic status families frequently absent themselves from school.	18 (25.4)	31 (43.7)	20 (28.2)	2 (2.8)	0 0	3.76
The learner's position in the family has a direct bearing on school attendance	12 (16.9)	22 (31)	17 (23.3)	20 (28.2)	0 0	3.30
Learners whose parents are educated get up early to go to school	21 (29.6)	26 (36.6)	19 (26.8)	5 (7)	0 0	3.79
The number of siblings at home affects the learners' school attendance	17 (23.9)	36 (50.7)	9 (12.7)	9 (12.7)	0 0	3.48

*Source: Primary Data, 2025*

Table 4.3 shows that 73.3% (29.6 + 43.7) of the respondents agreed with the statement that parents' education level influences learners' school attendance in lower universal secondary schools. The findings also revealed that learners from high socio-economic status families tend to attend school regularly (69.0% = 36.6 + 32.4) compared to those from low socio-economic status families and the minority 16 (22.5%) either were undecided or disagreed. This implied that socio-demographic factors influence learners' school attendance. This is substantiated by the findings in Table 4.3 above. The majority of the respondents (74.6% = 23.9 + 50.7) observed that the number of siblings at home can directly or indirectly influence learners' school attendance, though 25.4% (12.7 + 12.7) had a varied opinion that there is no correlation between socio-demographic factors and learners' school attendance. The findings of the study coincided with earlier studies by scholars and researchers like Wangui (2013) and Tukumbukege and Yohana (2024), who found that socio-demographic factors significantly contribute to students' school enrolment and retention. To a greater extent, comparing the results of the study and findings by Tukumbukege, Yohana, and Wangui, learners' school attendance greatly depends on socio-demographic factors at home. Regarding the occupation of parents on the learners' school attendance, the results showed that the parents' occupation influenced school attendance (75.9% = 32.3 + 43.6). The parents' occupation its influence had a mean of 3.77, implying a very high correlation between the variables, that is, home-based characteristics and learners' school attendance in USE schools in Masaka City.

However, 12.7% disagreed with the statement that the number of siblings at home affects learners' school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City. But the majority (74.6% = 23.9 + 50.7) were in agreement. The findings implied that the respondents were very aware that the number of siblings, especially when they are not properly spaced, the older children may, on some days miss school because they have to take care of their young siblings when parents are not at home. The number of siblings at home was significant in influencing learners' school attendance, and this was also linked to the parents' inability to provide children with the school requirements, causing learners to miss school on some days.

#### **4.3.2 Parents and guardians' responses on household characteristics and learners' school attendance**

Participants in this category of respondents were parents and guardians from the sampled lower universal secondary school in Masaka City. The respondents had varied responses on the influence of socio-demographic factors on learners' school attendance. The researcher holds

face-to-face interviews with parents and guardians, and some of the salient responses are summarized below:

*“If a family has many children and the parents have little financial means, it becomes hard for such parents to provide scholastic materials to all, and on some days, such children may not attend school,”* One of the respondents from the school coded C observed.

Another respondent made the observation below:

*“Learners of well-to-do families are likely to attend school regularly because their parents can afford to take them in boarding schools or pay bus fees. If the parents are educated, their children have role models to emulate. Such learners have academic aspirations that drive them to attend school regularly.”*

From the above verbal responses from respondents, the parents and guardians confirmed that the SES of the family where a learner comes from has an influence on school attendance. The results were in line with observations made by scholars like Shehu (2018), Ohno (2019) and Macunu, et.al (2021), children from LSES families join school at an old age compared to those from HSES families who can start school in senior one at an early age of 12 or 13 of LSES may not have money for boarding schools and their children should be able to walk to schools. The findings also coincided with the findings by Msafiri and Lianyu (2022), parents whose education level is low, coupled with low means of income, such parents tend to value domestic chores like fetching water, washing utensils, chasing birds destroying crops in the garden, and looking after the younger sibling more important than schooling. Children from LSES families are often delayed home for such chores, and at times, on some days, they don't attend school at all. This can be substantiated by the quote below. One of the respondents (parent) had this to say:

*“I am a single mother looking after five children..... their father ran away from home..... On some days, especially on market days, that is, Tuesday and Friday, one of them remains behind to take care of the younger one of three years..... and I go to the market to do petty jobs.....”*

The implication here is that such children, by the time they complete the primary cycle to join secondary school, are outgrown and, because of too irregular school attendance, they are likely to miss a great deal of classwork and they are likely to repeat classes. This may certainly affect their classroom concentration, achievement, and they become backward learners (Farrant, 2007; UNICEF, 2006).

#### **4.3.3 Students' responses on household socio–demographic characteristics and school attendance**

To understand the influence of household socio–demographic characteristics on learners' school attendance, the researcher holds face-to-face interviews. One of the respondents (a student) from the school coded C made the profound observation:

*“My father is not educated and cannot find a formal salaried job.....  
During the season for grasshoppers, I work with him to catch grasshoppers  
at night..... So on some days I don't go to school because of too  
much fatigue.”*

Another student from the school, coded B, lamented as explicitly indicated in the quote below:

*“If my parents had gone to school, they would have known the importance  
of child spacing and family planning, but they did not. They produced many  
children, and at times I miss school because I have to work and raise some  
money to buy scholastic materials for myself.”*

From the above students' responses, it is evident that many students would wish to attend school regularly, but at times the conditions at home hinder them from attending. In one of the studies on socio–economic status and academic performance conducted by Wangui (2013) in Narok North District in Kenya, the result showed that parents' level of income and level of education had a positive correlation with students' school achievement. Wangui's findings have coincided with the students' quotes in 4.3.3 above. The findings meant that parents with formal employment have HSES and can afford to pay fees for their children, and they always encourage their children to attend school regularly.

#### 4.4 Findings on learners’ school-based socio–demographic factors and school attendance

##### 4.4.1 Teachers, deputies, and head teachers' responses

The learners’ school-based socio–demographic factors have been considered and assumed to influence school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City. The responses varied considerably throughout the distributed questions. The variations in the level of agreement or disagreement could be based on their varied home background, as well as variations in SES. The respondents’ responses are summarized in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Learners’ school-based factors and school attendance**

Statement	SA 5	A 4	UD 3	D 2	SD 1	Mean
The teachers’ personality influences learners’ school attendance	16 (22.5)	36 (50.7)	9 (12.7)	10 (14.1)	0	3.44
Peer group influence has a bearing on school attendance	8 (11.3)	19 (26.8)	32 (45.1)	12 (16.9)	0	3.32
The school environment influences learners’ school attendance	15 (21.1)	34 (47.9)	18 (25.4)	4 (5.6)	0	3.62
The school culture influences school attendance	11 (15.5)	12 (16.9)	42 (59.2)	6 (8.5)	0	3.39
The teacher–student relationship has a bearing on school attendance	15 (21.1)	38 (53.5)	15 (21.1)	3 (4.2)	0	3.59

*Source: Primary Data, 2025*

The results in Table 4.4 above showed that the majority (73.2% = 22.5 + 50.7) indicated that the teachers’ personality can either promote or discourage learners from attending school. But 12.7% were undecided, and 14.1% disagreed. Although 45.1% were neutral (undecided), 38.1% (11.3 + 26.8) agreed that peer group influence can impact students' school attendance. It is important to note that 16.9% disagreed. They did not see a positive correlation between

learners' school-based factors and students' level of attendance in lower universal secondary schools. Generally, the overall 91.5% of the respondents indicated that learners' school-based demographic factors indicated in Table 4.4 above, highly influence or discourage learners from attending school regularly. However, 8.5% indicated that learners' school-based demographic factors do not affect learners' school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City. The findings coincided with earlier studies by Kumar et-al (2024) and Kujor (2021), who found those school-based factors can hinder students from attending school regularly. It might, however, be the teacher treating students unkindly or unjustly and causing the students to dislike such a teacher. As a result, some students without a clear inspiration or vision end up absenting themselves. The results implied that the teacher–student relationship (rapport), if it is not good, learners' school attendance is negatively affected. Students usually attend school in large numbers when teachers are friendly and willing to give the required instructions to the learners.

#### **4.4.2 Parents' responses on learners' school-based socio–demographic factors and school attendance**

The key informants interviewed had varying views on learners' school-based socio–demographic factors and how they influence learners' school attendance in lower universal secondary schools. The key respondents' responses were:

*“The school teacher can either promote or discourage students' school attendance. Some schools have strict and unfriendly school rules and regulations, which may affect attendance.”*

*“USE schools tend to have high enrolment with a high teacher-student ratio, and some schools have each class, having more than one stream. So at times, ascertaining absent students may not be easy, especially when teachers fail to make roll calling using the class register which is a routine...”*

*“If a student is not good in academics and good at co-curricular activities, his/her school attendance thrives most when a school has a rich menu of extra-curricular..... With the absence of a wide range of games and sports events, some students who are more interested in such may not regularly attend school.....”*

The responses of the three respondents above vividly indicated that learners' school-based demographics can influence learners' school attendance. Implicit in the respondents' views is that schools should have a rich menu of co-curricular activities, a reasonable teacher–student ratio, and school administration emphasizing administering positive sanctions that encourage students to conform to school rules and regulations, and rarely use negative sanctions to penalize learners who fail to meet school expectations. However, Farrant (2007) and Roby (2013) observed that very often learners who are always under constant fear their self-esteem is always low due to the impact of corporal punishments inflicted on them. These negative sanctions like punishment, affect school attendance and, in the long run, affect learners' school achievement negatively.

#### **4.4.3 Students' responses on learners' school-based socio–demographic factors and school attendance**

The salient responses from schools coded 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D', 'E', and 'F' were summarized in the following quotes below:

*Most USE schools have a large number of students compared to the teachers, and some teachers are often absent, and leave students alone. This allows day scholars to either escape or deliberately refuse to come to school..."*

*"On each particular day, female students miss school compared to boys because at school we do not gazette places where adolescent and pubescent students can change sanitary pads during their period..... Some of them, during their monthly periods, opt to stay at home. Those who come from families of LSES cannot afford to buy sanitary pads, and the reusable ones they do not have, they can change from washing or drying them....."*

The respondents were drawn from lower secondary (ordinary level), and one of the students made it categorically clear that:

*"At times, piped water is off, they find it hard to bathe, especially when they are in their period..."*

From the students' observation, the response confirmed that school-based factors have an impact on learners' school attendance. The interviewees further observed that the quality of the school environment directly or indirectly has an influence on learners' school attendance levels. The findings were in agreement with Yidiz (2018) and Mairu (2018), who observed that universalization of education increases students' enrolment in schools, but the school's sanitary resources become constrained to support the enrolled students.

#### 4.5 Findings on learners' personal-based socio-demographic factors and school attendance

##### 4.5.1 Teachers, Deputies and head teachers' responses

The respondents were asked to specify the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that learners based socio socio-demographic factors influenced their school attendance. The results are summarized in Table 4.5. The results revealed that learners' demographic factors like birth order, learner health conditions, interest, and commitment affect school attendance.

**Table 4.5: Respondents' responses on the influence of learners' demographic factors on school attendance**

Statement	SA 5	A 4	UD 3	D 2	SD 1	Mean
The learner's health condition has an impact on school attendance	8 (11.3)	19 (26.8)	27 (38)	15 (21.1)	2 (2.8)	3.2
The learner's interest in the school's programmes has an impact on school attendance	8 (11.3)	8 (11.3)	27 (38)	21 (29.6)	0 0	2.76
The peer group influences school attendance	21 (29.6)	28 (39.4)	8 (11.3)	0 0	14 (19.7)	3.87
The learner's human growth at development aspects, like puberty, influence girls' school attendance	7 (9.9)	8 (11.3)	27 (38)	21 (29.6)	8 (11.3)	2.76
The learner's educational outcomes influence school attendance	12 (16.9)	17 (23.2)	22 (31.0)	20 (28.2)	0 0	3.30
The level of students' commitment and desire influences school attendance	17 (23.9)	33 (86.5)	19 (26.8)	2 (2.8)	0 0	3.72

*Source: Primary Data, 2025*

Table 4.5 above shows that the majority (46.5%) of the respondents indicated that the level of students' commitment and desire to attend school influences school attendance, but the minority (2 = 2.8%) disagreed. It was further revealed that students' human growth and development aspects, like puberty, influence school attendance (21.2% = 9.9 + 11.3), though the majority, 38.0% were undecided.

From the table above (Table 4.5), the result meant the learners' characteristics like: learner's health condition, learner's interest, peer group influence on learner's human growth, learner's school academic achievement, and learner's level of commitment. The results were interpreted to mean that learners' demographics influence school attendance. However, it is worth noting that the learners' characteristics alone cannot guarantee school attendance; other socio – demographic must also play a significant role.

#### **4.6 Parents/guardians' responses on the influence of learners' personal socio–demographic factors on school attendance**

The key informants were interviewed on the influence of learners' personal socio–demographic factors on school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City. They explained that:

*“.....Firstborns, especially girls, may not attend morning and evening preps because they have to leave home in the morning after all domestic chores are accomplished, and in the evening, they usually rush home to take care of their younger siblings, especially those who are in nursery schools. When they come back from school, their elder sisters have to look after them before their parents come back home.....”*

*“Pubescent girls from LSES families miss school on some days when they are menstruating due to lack of sanitary pads.....”*

As shown in the foregoing citations, the interviewees (respondents) were aware of the influence of learners' personal socio–demographic factors, and they responded the way they did. The respondents' responses were in agreement with Namuleme (2018), who observed that students from LSES families tend to lack necessities, and their self-esteem tends to shrink. This implies

that low self-esteem students, their school attendance may have irregular school attendance because they feel that they are not worthy and tend to lack self-confidence.

The findings suggests that the socio – economic status of parents whether low or high has an influence on learners’ school attendance in a way that when a learner has whatever he/she wants at school and home, he/she will be interested in learning as well as attending school and always parents of HSES act as role models to their offsprings. The children will always want to be like their parents in the future, and therefore, they will be energized and empowered to study hard. Parents of a higher socio–economic status have paramount justifiable reasons to enroll their children and ensure that they study and complete their studies. The findings implied that learners’ school attendance is highly dependent on parents’ SES. In that way, students are in a better position to attend school regularly and excel, but this is dependent on the student’s zeal and interest.

#### **4.7 Students’ responses on learners’ personal socio–demographic factors and students’ school attendance**

During the oral interviews, the learners (interviewees) provided salient explanations. On the learners’ socio–demographic characteristics, students made the following profound observations:

*“Some students are of low intelligence quotient (IQ) and because of that, they are disinterested in schooling”.*

*“Some students, especially boys, on some days deliberately refuse to go to school and decide to engage in petty jobs to earn money.”*

The researcher noted that students’ responses were in agreement with the study, which was conducted by Bwomeni (2014), and also Amakuro and Robyenne, and Nsenguyumva (2025) conducted a study in South Africa on poor school attendance and found out that students’ personal socio–demographic factors had a role to play in school attendance. CHECK the pagination

#### **4.8 The implication of the findings on socio–demographic factors on learners’ school attendance**

The results on socio–demographic factors on students’ school attendance implied that school attendance in lower universal secondary schools is affected by factors which are home-based, school-based, school based as well as factors from the learners’ side. If USE becomes universal, accessible, and affordable, the MoES should make it compulsory and bring different stakeholders in Education on board with an aim of enhancing Education For All (EFA) as enshrined in the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) Number 2. In order for EFA to gain roots, learners should enroll; remain in school till they complete a given cycle of education. The PTA and BoGs should work hand – in – hand with teachers and devise strategies to check on chronic absenteeism of students. It is, therefore, imperative for all stakeholders to work as a team to ensure that learners attend school regularly.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three main sections: discussion, conclusion, and recommendation. For clarity, each of these sections is divided into three sub-sections by the specific objectives of the study.

#### 5.1 Discussion

##### 5.1.1 Household characteristics and learners' school attendance

Regarding household characteristics and learners' school attendance, the findings revealed that learners who come from low socio-economic status families always lack school requirements because of the low incomes of their parents. The findings of the study coincided with earlier findings by scholars like Mairu (2018), Msafiri and Lianyu (2022), and Macanu et-al (2021) who found out that children who come from low socio-economic status families do not get the required scholastic materials and, for this reason, their school attendance is hindered. Most of the respondents made it categorically clear that they observed that sometimes teachers at times chase these learners out of class for not having scholastic materials like pens, pencils, exercise books, calculators, geometry sets, graph books, logs, and practical books, among others. This is not often the case with children who come from HSES families.

##### 5.1.2 School-based demographics and learners' school attendance

The results show that all the lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City, some school-based demographics affect learners' school attendance either positively or negatively. Therefore, the study results suggest that the teacher's personality, the school environment, and school culture have a bearing on learners' school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City. One of the respondents observed that:

*“The school teacher can either promote or discourage students' school attendance because some teachers are friendly and others are rude.....”*

The results suggest that the way the teachers treat the children may affect not only their self-esteem and their attitudes towards their fellow learners, but also be responsible for part of their

school attendance behaviour. However, the study also indicates that in each of the lower universal secondary schools which were involved in the survey, the respondents revealed that the teacher–pupil relationship (rapport) is key in enhancing learners’ school attendance in USE schools.

The findings were in agreement with Farrant (2007), Fontana (2016), and Kumar et-al (2024) observed that the teacher–student relationship on school day begins with a greeting. A greeting is not simply something that the teacher decides to call a “greeting” whenever it happens; it is an exchange that takes place between the teacher and his/her learners, and it determines the nature of the relationship that follows. The conceptualization of the study took cognizance of the fact that a good teacher–student relationship boosts learners’ school attendance.

### **5.1.3 Learners’ characteristics and learners’ school attendance**

The learners’ characteristics were found to have a positive correlation to school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City. The key informants’ views on learners’ characteristics and how such factors influence school attendance. According to Ali and Hayat (2019) and Shehu (2018), they contend that the students’ desire to learn influenced school attendance. From the third study objective concerning the influence of learners’ personal demographics and school attendance, the respondents’ responses were analyzed. According to the results, learners’ birth order can influence school attendance. A learner may miss school because of his/her birth order; the firstborn may miss school in case the mother is away and he or she is required to take care of his/her siblings. The present study concluded that the firstborn children usually miss school on “market days,” that is, on “Tuesday” and “Friday,” when parents have gone to the market either to sell or buy items. The firstborn stays at home to take care of the young siblings and sick family members; older children also contribute to the family income. The findings also revealed that middle-order children receive less attention from parents and guardians and are more prone to truancy (absenteeism).

## **5.2 Conclusion**

### **5.2.1 Household characteristics and learners’ school attendance**

It was concluded that household socio–demographic factors influence learners’ school attendance in lower universal secondary schools. Attributes like the socio–economic status, that is, the education level of parents, the occupations they hold, and parents’ income, number of

siblings at home, and other factors have an influence on school attendance. The result showed that if a learner comes from a well-to-do family where parents have formal employment and they earn good salaries, such parents can provide whatever the learner requires to learn well at school. Since such a child has role models to emulate at home, he/she is likely to attend school regularly. It was also concluded that learners from families where there are many siblings and parents are low-income earners, such children at times omit school due to a lack of scholastic materials. Thus, socio-demographic factors either directly or indirectly influence learners' school attendance. The Murray Douglas McGregor's theory 'X' and Theory 'Y', their assumptions apply. As Nwa-Chili (2016) noted that the socio-economic characteristics of the family where the child comes from have a direct bearing on academic aspirations, school attendance, success, and academic achievement. They have a bearing on when someone enrolls in school, school retention, and completion. Learners who hail from HSES families, the so-called privileged homes, are always outgoing and tend to perform better at school due to exposure compared to those who hail from LSES families who survive depending on of people good will.

### **5.2.2 Learners' school – based socio – demographic factors and learners' school attendance**

The study concluded that school-based factors have an impact on learners' school attendance. The results indicate the need for schools to have a conducive learning environment, which can stimulate and motivate learners to attend school regularly. Educationalists like Farrant (2007) and Fontana (1995) observed that the school is another home away from home. This implies that learners are eager to attend school if the teachers are friendly and if the school has rich co-curricular activities, which can help the learners to discover and develop their talents. The findings revealed that school-based conditions, if not stimulating, are one of the primary causes of absenteeism among learners in lower universal secondary schools. This aligns with previous research findings by Ali and Hayat (2019) and Deri and Amika (2020), who found that school-based factors had an impact on school attendance and well as academic performance.

### **5.2.3 Learners' socio-demographic factors and learners' school attendance**

It was concluded that there is a significant relationship between learners' personal socio-demographic factors and school attendance in USE schools. The results revealed that the learners' educational outcomes have a direct bearing on school attendance (40.1%). This implies that a learner whose educational outcomes are desirable is motivated to attend school

regularly. The findings also revealed that the student's level of commitment and desire to learn compels him or her to attend school regularly (70.4% = 23.9 + 46.5). Thus, it was concluded that there is a positive correlation between learners' personal socio-demographic factors and school attendance in lower universal secondary schools. In the same vein, Mogale and Modipane (2021) contended that the student's zeal and interest in schooling. Play a vital part in his/her school attendance and performance. This results of the study underscores the need to address all the learners personal socio – demographics like the influence of human growth and development, for instance, one of the respondents from Form 'A' in a school which was coded 'E' revealed that during her menstrual periods which lasts for 3 – 5 days, she does not attend school because of the "heavy flow of blood" and due to lack of sanitary pads because the reusable ones are also inconveniencing to carry from home to school. The respondent further revealed that at their school, piped water is always off. Such absences hinder school attendance, especially of female students of that caliber.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

#### **5.3.1 Household socio-demographic factors and school attendance**

The researcher recommended that learners' school attendance should be taken as a priority by the parents and guardians. Throughout the reviewed literature, it was found that jeopardizing students' school attendance emanates from home. The findings indicated that some parents of low income on some days of the week leave their siblings whenever they go to the market to sell their merchandise in Nyendo or Masaka Central Markets on Tuesdays and Fridays, respectively. For this reason, therefore, the researcher recommends that the PTA and BoGs committees should hold engagement meetings with parents and remind them of their role in the implementation of Universal Secondary Education (USE)

The parents should be made aware of the significance of having a stimulating home environment that is free from noise and conflicts. For these reasons, religious leaders, Local Government Councils, and teachers should make them aware and remind them that good academic results are partly determined by school attendance. It is the responsibility of the parent to guide, counsel, provide scholastic materials, uniforms, midday meals, and encourage their children to attend school regularly.

### **5.3.2 Learners' school-based socio–demographic factors and learners' school attendance**

The findings revealed that some of the conditions at school, like poor teacher–pupil relationships and lack of rich co-curricular programmes in some USE schools, hamper learners' school attendance. So the researcher recommends that the government also facilitate with play materials used in games and sports. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) should increase the School Facilitation Grants (SFGs) given to schools, and the grants should be released timely to facilitate and enable school headteachers to go through the procurement processes. The researcher further recommends that the MoES should regularly organize refresher courses for teachers on how to enhance the teacher–student relationship. It is hoped that once this is done, students' school attendance may be boosted because when students leave their respective homes, they expect to find “another school home”.

The researcher also recommends that school administration regularly use both positive and negative sanctions to encourage those who regularly attend school and also deal with notorious absentees. School rules should be codified and signed by both parents and students on admission day, and students should always be reminded about the repercussions of absenteeism.

### **5.3.3 Learners' personal socio–demographic factors and school attendance**

The researcher strongly recommends that there should be a continuous dialogue between students and teachers. This can be done during school assemblies or by offering ethical talks aimed at providing guidance and counseling to students. There is a need to promote what is called the ‘No Student Should Be Left Behind campaign. The irregular attendees should be made aware of the dangers of irregular attendance at school. The findings revealed that some students miss school due to peer group influence. The collaboration between the family and the school should be intensified because the two agents of socialization play complementary roles in socializing students about school norms.

## **5.4 Suggested area for further research**

After conducting on socio-demographic characteristics and learners' school attendance in selected lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City, it is recommended that there is a need to conduct a study on “Parental Socio–Economic Status and Students' Academic Performance in Selected Rural-Based USE Schools in Greater Masaka.”

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Consent Form

**Uganda Martyrs University**  
**P.O. Box5498**  
**Kampala.**

Dear Respondent,

I am a Master’s student at the School of Post-Graduate Studies and Research at Uganda Martyrs University. As part of my study program, I am supposed to research an approved research topic:

***“Socio–Demographic Factors and Learners’ School Attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City”***

Your school has been selected to participate in the study because you’re believed to have relevant knowledge on how socio–demographic factors can influence learners’ school attendance and the information you will provide will lead to the successful completion of the research project. Therefore, you’re requested to fill the questionnaire attached overleaf.

The researcher obtained permission from the school head teacher and the Masaka City Education Officer. The information you will provide will be used for academic purposes and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Participation in the study is on a voluntary basis. Your identity will remain anonymous and the researcher will never invade your privacy.

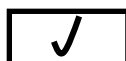
Yours faithfully,



.....  
**NAMULI SYLVIA**  
**2023 – M313 - 23171**  
**RESEARCHER**

### Consent Clause

Tick where applicable



I will be able to participate in the study

I will not be able to participate in the study

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Contact : \_\_\_\_\_

Email address : \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B: Questionnaire for Teachers, Deputies and Head teachers on Socio – Demographic Factors and Learners’ School Attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City**

I am Namuli Sylvia a Masters student at the School of Graduate Studies and Research at Uganda Martyrs University. As part of my study program, I am supposed to undertake a research on an approved topic:


***“Socio – Demographic Factors and Learners’ School Attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools in Masaka City”.***

Your school has been selected and you have been identified as a resourceful person to participate in the study because you are believed to have relevant information required to have relevant information required for the successful completion of the research project. You are therefore requested to fill the questionnaire attached.

Please be rest assured that the information you will provide will only be used for academic purposes and utmost confidentiality will be guaranteed. The responses you will provide will strictly remain under the custody of the researcher and your identity will be kept anonymous and the findings of the study will be reported in aggregate in the final dissertation. The researcher will never invade your privacy.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

  
.....

**NAMULI SYLVIA**

**2023 – M313 - 23171**

**RESEARCHER**

**Consent Clause**

Tick where applicable

I will be able to participate in the study

I will not be able to participate in the study

**SECTION A:**

**Demographic characteristics about respondents**

<b>Background information</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Tick</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Specify your school		
SA <sub>1</sub> : Please specify your gender	Male	
	Female	
SA <sub>2</sub> : Specify status at school	Head teacher	
	Deputy	
	Director of studies	
	Class teacher	
	Teacher	
SA <sub>3</sub> : Work experience	0 – 9 years	
	10 – 29 years	
	30 – 39 years	
	40 years and above	
SA <sub>4</sub> : Your highest academic qualification	Diploma secondary education	
	Degree	
	Masters	
	PGDE	

	PhD	
<b>Background information</b>	<b>Variable</b>	Tick <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
SA <sub>5</sub> : Age bracket	20 – 29 years	
	30 – 39 years	
	40 – 49 years	
	50 years and above.	
SA <sub>6</sub> : Marital status	Single	
	Married	
	Divorced or separated	
	Any other? Specific ..... .....	

**SECTION B:**

**Verification of variables for household (home – based) socio – demographic factors and learners’ school attendance**

SB1. Comment on learners’ school attendance in this school.

.....

.....

.....

SB2. What is the influence of home – based factors learners’ school attendance?

.....

SB3. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to the following statements as follows:

- 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)
- 4 = Agree (A)
- 3 = Undecided (UD)
- 2 = Disagree (D)
- 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

No.	Statement	Level of Agreement				
		SA 5	A 4	UD 3	D 2	SD 1
SB3 (i).	The education levels of the parents influence learners' school attendance.					
SB3 (ii).	The parents' occupation has a direct bearing on learners' school attendance.					
SB3 (iii).	Learners who come from high socio – economic status families attend school regularly.					
SB3 (iv).	Learners who came from low socio – economic status families frequently absent themselves from school.					
SB3 (v).	Learners' position in the family has a direct bearing on school attendance.					
SB3 (vi).	Learners whose parents are educated get up early to go to school.					
SB3 (vii).	The number of siblings at home affects the learners' school attendance.					

SB4. What are the home-based socio – demographic factors that can have an influence on learners' school attendance?

- i) .....
- ii) .....

iii) .....

iv) .....

SB 5. What is the influence of the distance from home to school on learners' school attendance?

.....  
.....

**SECTION C:**

**Learners' school – based factors and school attendance**

SC 1. Is there a relationship between learners' school based factors and school attendance?

a) Yes                       b) No

SC 2. If yes or no explain.

.....  
.....

SC 3. Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to the following statements as follows:

5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

4 = Agree (A)

3 = Undecided (UD)

2 = Disagree (D)

1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

No.	Statement	Level of Agreement				
		SA	A	UD	D	SD
		5	4	3	2	1
SC3 (i).	The teacher's personality has an influence on learners' school attendance.					
SC3 (ii).	Peer group influence has a direct bearing on learners' school attendance.					

SC3 (iii).	The school influence has a direct bearing on learners' school attendance.					
SC3 (iv).	The learner's class position has a direct bearing on his/her school attendance.					
SC3 (v).	The school culture influence learners' school attendance.					
SC3 (vi).	The teacher – learner relationship (rapport) has a direct bearing on learners' school attendance in USE schools.					

**SECTION D:**

**Learners' personal based socio – demographic factors and school attendance**

SD 1. How do learners' personal based socio – demographic factors affect students' school attendance in Lower Universal Secondary Schools?

- i) .....
- ii) .....
- iii) .....
- iv) .....

SD 2. Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to the following statements as follows:

- 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)
- 4 = Agree (A)
- 3 = Undecided (UD)
- 2 = Disagree (D)
- 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

No.	Statement	Level of Agreement				
		SA	A	UD	D	SD
		5	4	3	2	1
SD2 (i).	The learner's health condition has an impact on school attendance.					
SD2 (ii).	The learner's interest in school programmes has an impact on school attendance.					

SD2 (iii).	The learner's human growth and development aspects like puberty influence girls' school attendance.					
SD2 (iv).	The peer groups influence learner's school attendance.					
SD2 (v).	The learner's levels of commitment and desire have an influence on school attendance.					
SD2 (vi).	The learner's educational outcomes have an influence on school attendance					

SD3. How learners' school attendance can be enhanced in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City?

- i) .....
- ii) .....
- iii) .....
- iv) .....

End

Thank you for your time and participation

### **Appendix C: Interview Guide to parents**

- 1) Do you have children attending USE school(s)?
- 2) Comment on the influence of home – based socio – demographic factors learners’ school attendance in lower universal secondary schools.
- 3) What is the role of parents in enhancing their learners’ school attendance in lower universal secondary schools?
- 4) How school based socio – demographic factors encourage learners’ school attendance in lower universal secondary schools?
- 5) How school based socio – demographic factors discourage school attendance in lower universal secondary schools?
- 6) What are some of the learners’ personal based socio – demographic factors that can influence school attendance?
- 7) How learners’ school attendance can be enhanced in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City?

End

Thank you for your time and participation

## **Appendix D: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Students**

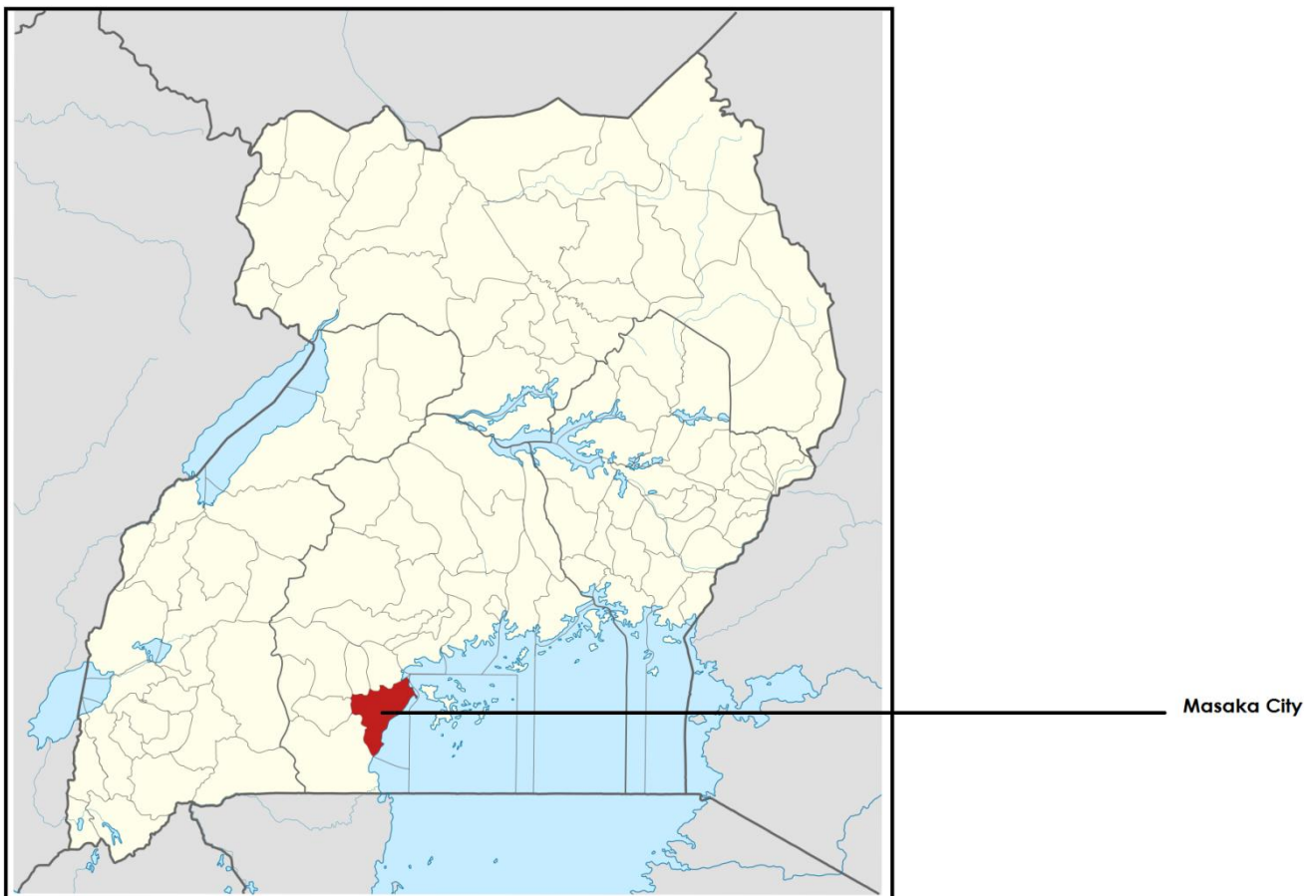
- 1) In which class are you?
- 2) What was your position in class last term?
- 3) Do you have both parents?
- 4) If yes, are they staying together?
- 5) What is the education level of your parents:
  - a) Father?
  - b) Mother?
- 6) In your family, how many children are attending schools?
- 7) How does the home based socio – demographic factors affect your school attendance?
- 8) What school based socio – demographic factors that encourage to attend school regularly?
- 9) What school based socio – demographic factors that discourages you from attending school regularly?
- 10) How does your parents' occupation influence your school attendance?
- 11) How does your parents' economic status affect your school attendance?

- 12) How does your parents' level of education affect your school attendance?
- 13) How does learner's personal based demographic factors influence school attendance in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City?
- 14) How learners' school attendance can be enhanced in lower universal secondary schools in Masaka City?

End

Thank you for your time and participation

#### Appendix E: Map of Uganda showing Masaka City



**Appendix F: Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Sample Size Estimation Table.**

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	246
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	351
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	181	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	180	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	190	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	200	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	210	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	373
65	56	220	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	230	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	240	144	550	225	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	250	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	260	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	270	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	256	2600	335	100000	384

Note: "N" is population size  
"S" is sample size.

*Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970*



## Appendix G: Authorization Letter from Uganda Martyrs University

Uganda  
MARTYRS  
University



making a difference

The Faculty of Education

Date: 02/05/25

Re: **PERMISSION LETTER TO CONDUCT FIELD RESEARCH**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Greetings from Uganda Martyrs University. The Faculty of Education is delighted to introduce Namuli Sylvia, Registration number 2023\_M313\_2317, a student pursuing a Master of Education degree of Uganda Martyrs University. She is undertaking research in partial fulfillment of the requirements leading to the degree award.

Her research topic is: **Socio-demographic factors and learners' school attendance in selected universal secondary schools in Masaka City.**

We request that you offer her the necessary assistance in order to complete this research project. For further inquiry on this matter, please contact me at 0772-366156 or email: aodele@umu.ac.ug. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anne Odele  
Head of Postgraduate Department  
Faculty of Education