



# Mental Health and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the relationship between mental health and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda. The study was guided by following specific objectives; i) To assess the relationship between depression and students' academic performance, ii) To explore the relationship between anxiety disorders and students' academic performance, and iii) To assess the relationship between bipolar disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda. The study adopted a correlational research design based on both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A sample size of 56 respondents was considered constituting of administrators and teachers from the selected public secondary school in Kampala City. Descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and thematic analysis were employed to provide answers to the study phenomenon. The study revealed that there is a moderately negative and statistically significant relationship between depression and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda. The study also revealed that there is a very strong negative and statistically significant relationship between anxiety disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda. Further, the study revealed that there is a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between bipolar disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda. Therefore, the study concludes that mental health in form of depression, anxiety disorders, and bipolar disorders has a statistically significant association with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda in that a reduction in the different forms of mental health will resultantly lead to an improvement in students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda. The study recommends that the government through the Ministry of Education should integrate mental health education into the curriculum to help students understand and manage their emotions, stress, depression, anxiety, and mental health issues as this would influence an

improvement in students' academic performance in schools in the country including public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

**Keywords:** Mental Health, Depression, Anxiety Disorders, Bipolar Disorders, and Students' Academic Performance. **Introduction**

The study aimed at determining how students' academic performance in public secondary schools is related to their mental health. Academic performance and mental health are thought to be closely related, particularly in the stages of adolescence when the outcome clearly affects a student's future opportunities.

## **Background to the study**

### **Historical background**

In years back, student's mental health has received a lot of attention on a global scale (Abel & Nasab, 2021). The large number of students in public secondary schools in USA are living with mental health disorders and this has greatly affected the academic results of students (Abdelaziz & Abu-Snieneh, 2022). Mental health disorder was a burden to secondary school students and in 1900s, there brought a negative impact on the academic achievement of American secondary school students (Abel, & Nasab, 2021). The field of mental health in Germany has historically concentrated on psychological disorders including anxiety and depression (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019). According to Anbari and Moslemi (2019), the most common mental health conditions among secondary school students are oppositional defiance disorder, bi-polar disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder and impulse disorders. In addition, the majority of secondary school students less than half have mental health issues; roughly one-third of them require proper mental treatment (Al-Khani, 2019).

In Africa, between 20% and 27% of mental problems occur when it is very early in life starting from adolescence stage and can be treated well if identified by the professional mental health doctor hence in learning institutions, mental disorder is a significant public health concern (Kutcher et al., 2022). In Kenya and Nigeria, students in secondary schools who experience mental health issues in particular perform poorly in class rooms, fail to attend classes and drop out of school more frequently (DeSocio & Hootman, 2023). Furthermore, little research has been done to determine the specific effect of these conditions on children's academic ability; instead, secondary students have been the focus of most studies on the connection between academic performance and mental health (Ogutu, 2020).

According to Mwesigwa (2021), most students in Ugandan public secondary schools are living with mental health problems and students with such issues often obtain lower scores and are more prone to encounter academic challenges. This project aims to investigate the relationship between students' academic performance and mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and stress. Not only the mental health problems among Ugandan secondary students contribute to poor academic performance in final results, but they also have a negative effect on education as whole. Secondary students with mental health issues are more likely to miss schools as the result of experiencing more challenges at school, particularly in the area of academic performance (Nabbamba, 2021).

## Theoretical background

The Cognitive Behavioural Theory of Mental Health, developed by Beck in 1964, provides the foundation for this study. It suggests that a major assumption underlying mental disorders is that the symptomatic behaviour present in individuals with various neuroses especially phobias and other anxiety disorders which are learned behaviours that have developed into conditioned responses. Cognitive behavioural theory is based on the idea that an individual's assumptions, expectations, and interpretations of events give rise to the individual's negative experience of those events, which in turn leads to negative emotions that lead to depression and anxiety (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019). The theory states that specific environmental changes and avoidant behaviours inhibit individuals from experiencing environmental reward and reinforcement and subsequently leads to the development and maintenance of depressive symptoms.

The theory states that mental illnesses including depression, stress, and anxiety can negatively impact students' academic outcomes and competence, all of which can lead to school drop out among the affected students. Behavioural theory, however, does not incorporate the idea of the unconscious to account for students' mental health and academic achievement in learning institutions (Anbari & Moslemi, 2019).

## Conceptual background

According to Anbari, Z. & Moslemi (2019), mental health refers to a person's psychosocial and mental well-being, which influences and leads his behavioural pattern to adjust to the demands and pressures of his environment and make wise choices and judgements. In addition, having good mental health guarantees that people have fulfilling relationships, maintain emotional stability and give back to society (Anbari, Z. & Moslemi, 2019).

According to Sullo and Anderson-Butcher (2021) mental health is a condition of well-being in which a person is aware of his or her own potential to handle normal problems and able to give back to their community. Additionally, mental health is the cornerstone of both personal fulfilment and the ability of a society to function effectively (World health mental report, 2022).

Academic performance is defined as the achievements realized by students in form of grades, they score from the assessments administered by their school or local, regional or national examination bodies (Marks, 2023). In this study, academic performance refers to the quality of the academic grades scored by the students from exams administered by their schools as well as the level at which they are able to demonstrate literacy, numeracy and life skills they are expected to acquire from academic instruction (Tehrani, & Sheraghi, 2023).

Students' mental health disorders experienced by students in secondary schools interfere with their psychosocial and mental well-being as a result of the academic related school activities which affect their behavioural tendencies, biological disposition, sensory and perceptual processes and prevent them from participating in academic activities (Anbari, & Moslemi, 2019). A person's mental state plays a critical role in his or her overall health because all the ideas and thoughts which can lead to a variety of behaviours originate from there. Mental health conducts and governs behaviour, communication, and personal functioning as well as behavioral changes (Bhargava and Raina, 2023).

## Contextual background

In public secondary schools in Kampala City, mental health illnesses have negative impact on academic performance of affected students which can also have an impact on future employment, health, and socioeconomic status, adolescents with mental health disorders which make them struggle to attain academic achievements (Lugemwa, 2021). Students in good mental health are able to live harmoniously with others and make appropriate decisions. However, mental health issues impair a student's level of energy, focus, dependability, mental capacity, and optimism, which negatively impacts academic performance in Kampala, Uganda's public secondary schools (Dhikusoka, 2022).

## Statement of the Problem

Students' academic performance in public secondary schools is significantly affected by their mental health, which is an essential component of well-being of an individual (Kutcher, 2022). One of the main objectives of a school is to measure the academic performance of students with mental health issues in public secondary schools through the results of the UNEB examination. Moreover, the establishment of diverse secondary schools is motivated by the desire to enhance academic performance by imparting knowledge and skills to their students.

In recent years, discontent with students' academic performance in various schools in National Examinations has become widespread in Uganda. Students with good academics and balanced mental health can achieve the good position in the class as well as in the society. Also, well academic performers with steady mental health may get the favorable outcome in their exams and may pass over their obstacles related to different problems (Marks, 2023). However, according to UCE assessment report (2021), the academic performance of students with mental problems presented by secondary schools in Kampala City has always been declining. Furthermore, there is wide research gap on the link between mental problems and academic outcomes of students in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda hence the need for the study.

## General objective of the Study

The general objective of the study was to examine the relationship between mental health and students' academic in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

## Specific objectives of the Study

- i. To assess the relationship between depression and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda
- ii. To explore the relationship between anxiety disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda
- iii. To assess the relationship between bipolar disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda

## Research hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between depression and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between anxiety disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between bipolar disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda

### **Scope of the study**

This research is aimed at determining how students' academic outcomes in public secondary schools is related to their mental health in Kampala, Uganda. The research paid particular attention to how students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala, Uganda, is affected by depression, anxiety disorders and bipolar disorders.

The research was conducted in public secondary schools located in Nakawa Division, Kampala Uganda. The location has been chosen for the study because it is easily accessible to information about the research and is near the University. The study was carried out over a five-year period that is from 2019 to 2024. This is because in the financial years from 2019 to 2024, the academic performance of students with mental disorders has been declining.

### **Research Justification**

Most studies about mental health in secondary schools are in other sectors away from the school setting. Mental health in public secondary schools has both rational and emotional aspects (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2022). Given that most literature talks about mental health in learning institutions in other sectors other than the education sector and are mostly outside Uganda, this study therefore is meant to close the knowledge gap in relation to the association between mental health and students' academic outcomes in public secondary schools in Kampala, Uganda.

### **Significance of the Study**

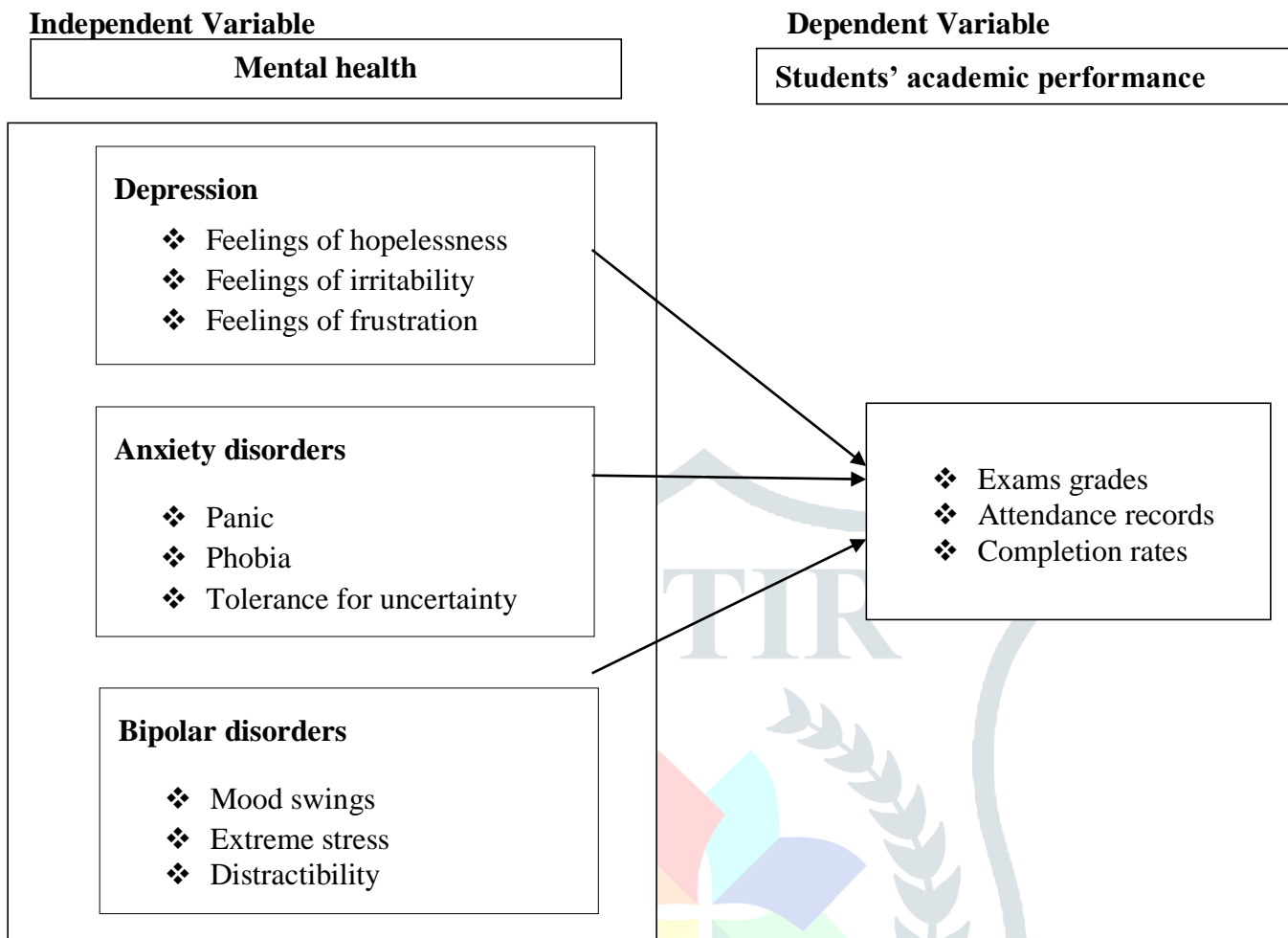
The research findings might very beneficial to public secondary school administrators in Kampala Uganda. The results of this study might also have a big impact on Uganda's education system by highlighting how important it is to enhance mental health in public secondary schools.

The research results regarding the link between students' academic achievement in learning institutions and their mental health might helpful in supplying additional knowledge to academics and other scholars.

The results might add to other people's understanding of the subject with new data and point out areas that require more investigation into the link between students' academic outcomes and mental health in public secondary schools.

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research is depicted in Figure 1 below.



*Source: Shimawua, (2021) and the researcher's own construction (2024)*

### Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework on how mental health relates to students' academic performance

The independent variable will be mental health whose dimensions include: Depression, Anxiety disorders and Bipolar disorders. Depression is measured in terms of Feelings of hopelessness, feelings of irritability and feelings of frustration. In addition, the components of Anxiety disorders are; panic, phobia and tolerance for un certainty. The dimensions of Bipolar disorders are: mood swings, extreme stress and distractibility. However, the students' academic performance is measured in terms of exams grades, attendance records and completion rates.

### Operational definition to key terms and concepts

**Mental health** refers to a person's psychosocial and mental well-being, which influences and leads his behavioural pattern to adjust to the demands and pressures of his environment and make wise choices and judgements (Anbari & Moslemi, 2019).

**Academic performance** is defined as the achievements realized by students in form of grades, they score from the assessments administered by their school or local, regional or national examination bodies (Marks, 2023).

**Depression** is a type of mood illness that results in a chronically depressing and uninteresting state. The majority of depressed individuals respond better to medication, psychotherapy, or both (Fletcher, 2022).

**Bipolar disorders:** A person with bipolar disorder experiences atypical fluctuations in their mood, energy, level of activity, and ability to concentrate (Sindhu, 2020).

**An anxiety disorder** refers to the mental health condition (Martinez, & Ritchie, 2020).

## Literature Review

### Theoretical literature review

Cognitive behavioural theory by Beck in 1964 is based on the idea that an individual's assumptions, expectations, and interpretations of events give rise to the individual's negative experience of those events, which in turn leads to negative emotions that lead to depression and anxiety (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019). The theory states that specific environmental changes and avoidant behaviours inhibit individuals from experiencing environmental reward and reinforcement and subsequently leads to the development and maintenance of depressive symptoms. The theory states that mental illnesses including depression, stress, and anxiety can negatively impact students' academic outcomes and competence, all of which can lead to school dropout among the affected students. Behavioural theory, however, does not incorporate the idea of the unconscious to account for students' mental health and academic achievement in learning institutions (Anbari & Moslemi, 2019). The theory suggests that a major assumption underlying mental disorders is that the symptomatic behaviour present in individuals with various neuroses especially phobias and other anxiety disorders which are learned behaviours that have developed into conditioned responses.

### Related literature review

The relationship between students' academic performance in public secondary schools and their mental health is critically reviewed in this comprehensive assessment of related literature.

### Depression and students' academic performance in public secondary schools

According to Shumaila et al. (2015), there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students with low, medium, and high levels of depression. The study examined the effects of depression on students' academic performance and found that there was a negative effect. Based on a person's family, community and depressive symptoms, Fletcher (2022) investigated the likelihood of receiving a diagnosis of depression. He discovered, using data from the Adolescent Health Study, that minorities and men are less likely to receive a depression diagnosis. Males are also found to be mostly unaffected in terms of educational performance, with the effects of depression on females being far more severe. According to Fletcher (2022), females who experience depression have a higher likelihood of dropping out of high school and have an impact on other people's academic performance.

Fletcher (2022) stipulate that Parents, teachers, school administrators, the government, curriculum designers and the general public are all concerned about their children's academic performance. As a result, numerous studies have been conducted in the past few years to look into the social and psychological factors that affect students' academic performance, including socioeconomic status, the inability to manage a heavy course load, anxiety, stress, personality, unfavourable teacher attitudes, and depression (Dekker & Giesbers, 2020).

Depression is a term used to describe transient emotions such as melancholy, despair, and discouragement. It can also refer to a symptom, a syndrome, or a mood (Fletcher, 2022). When these emotions last and are linked to issues like diminished enjoyment, despondency, guilt, and irregular eating and sleeping schedules, it is referred to as a symptom. Secondary school students' academic performance is impacted by the syndrome as a whole, which is also referred to as depression or depressive disorder (Brännlund & Nilsson, 2022).

Billingsley & Hurd, (2019) revealed that feelings of sadness, weakness, disappointment, frustration, despair, helplessness, and hopelessness can all be signs of depression. Because they lack courage in their actions, many depressed people could find it difficult to function properly at school as they consequently experience constant disappointment and hopelessness (Sindhu, 2020). They have a pessimistic outlook and regard themselves as failures. Poor marks are just one of the numerous major issues that this disease can undoubtedly lead to in their academic lives (Sindhu, 2020).

### **Anxiety disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools**

According to Dekker and Giesbers (2020), there is a common understanding that test anxiety impairs working memory, which in turn causes lower exam performance. This is because anxiety impacts cognitive processes through working memory capacity. Anxiety makes people overthink things which makes them forgetful. missing from class, which has an immediate negative effect on their performance and learning (Abel & Nasab, 2021).

Anxiety typically arises when someone anticipates that an impending event will require actions for which they are unprepared and, hence, do not have the necessary coping mechanisms (Martinez, & Ritchie, 2020). In this case, anxiety acts as a strong warning to the person that they are not ready for the impending disaster. On the other hand, anxiety affects people differently based on how it interacts with the process of completing a task. On the other hand, excessive worry can be fatal since it impairs performance and stimulates the body system beyond what it is normally capable of (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019).

According to Tennant's (2021), depiction of anxiety and the way in which adolescents perceive their test anxiety dictates whether they receive a favourable or negative score. While most people agree that taking an exam can be nerve-racking, each student experiences test anxiety to varying degrees. The worry and emotionality components of test anxiety are distinct ideas, yet they work together to influence students' test anxiety levels (Anbari & Moslemi, 2019).

According to Coon and Mitter (2022), a low to moderate level of exam anxiety is frequently seen as advantageous for students and acts as a positive motivator by inspiring them to work harder to achieve academic success. On the other hand, elevated exam anxiety is regarded as a danger to kids' mental and physical

health. Elevated levels of test anxiety negatively impact students' academic performance, social interactions, and privacy (Zahrakar, 2022). It is important to comprehend the concept of mental health and how they affect students' academic performance.

According to Sharma and Sud (2021), Test anxiety's physiological symptoms are linked to the emotionality component, while its psychological symptoms are linked to the concern component (Harris & 2018). Furthermore, a number of anxiety-related issues, including weariness, lack of focus, motivation decline, loneliness, fear, or panic, can contribute to depression and have a detrimental impact on secondary school pupils' academic performance (Martinez & Ritchie, 2020).

### **Bipolar disorders and academic performance of students in public secondary schools**

Students with bipolar disorder face many obstacles, but their academic success can be enhanced by providing them with knowledge, compassion, and focused treatments (Tennant's, 2021). It enables students to overcome challenges and realize their full potential by fostering supportive environments and raising mental health awareness (Tehrani & Sheraghi, 2023). The misdiagnosed mental health illness bipolar disorder can have a major impact on a person's academic achievement. Additionally, bipolar disorder affects a student's capacity for learning and success in a classroom.

Unpredictable mood swings are as a result of bipolar disorder. These emotional swings may impair a student's ability to focus, concentrate, and engage in educational tasks (Brännlund & Nilsson, 2022). People with bipolar illness may experience difficulties with their cognitive functioning even after their mood episodes have passed (Anbari, Z. & Moslemi, 2019). Working memory functions that could be affected include memory updating and serial recall. These deficiencies have a direct effect on students' secondary school academic achievement (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019).

The emotional swings of bipolar disease may make it difficult for students to maintain regular attendance. Students may display hyperactivity, flight of ideas, and risk-taking behaviour during manic episodes. On the other hand, depressed episodes result in low energy, lack of interest, and trouble focusing, which negatively impacts academic performance (Anbari, Z. & Moslemi, 2019).

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research design**

This research employed a correlational research design since questionnaire-based research is typically quicker, less expensive and easier to use (Gibbons, 2021). This research design adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

#### **Population and sample size**

The study targeted a population of 65 respondents comprising of school administrators and teachers. The target respondents was used because the target participants are aware of what is going on in the classroom and how mental health affects students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

#### **Sample size**

A sample of 56 respondents was selected to represent the whole population using purposive and simple random sampling method constituting of (8) administrators and (48) teachers. The sample was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan Tables of sample size determination (See Appendix III).

## **Data collection instruments**

### **Self-administered questionnaires**

The target respondents' information was collected using the questionnaire in this research project. The sampled respondents were given the questionnaires by the researcher, who then returned to pick up the completed questionnaires after responding to the questions at their convenience.

### **Interview Guide**

The key informants were interviewed by the researcher using an interview guide that was prepared and used. The selection of interviews was based on their perceived ability to offer comprehensive insights into a certain study question or issue (Yin, 2018).

### **Data Quality and control**

The researcher made sure that appropriate levels of validity and reliability of the study are accomplished through proper control of extraneous variables. The study used the test-retest approach to test the instrument reliability, which entails giving the identical instruments to the same individuals twice. This was accomplished by choosing a suitable sample of respondents. After seeking guidance from the supervisor, the researcher pre-tested the instruments and after pre-testing, any unclear questions were then eliminated in order to ensure the validity of the instruments.

### **Data analysis and presentation**

The study employed both descriptive and correlation analysis methods in analyzing the quantitative primary data collected. Descriptive analysis was used when analyzing respondents' demographics presented in form of frequencies and percentages. In order to examine the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, Spearman's rank correlation analysis was employed to give the empirical evidence on the study hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Spearman's Rank Correlation measures the relationship between two ordinal or nominal variables (Jerrold, 2016). Additionally, qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involved the transformation of respondents' views and perceptions by the researcher into themes in relation to the research questions and these were presented in form of verbatim quotations so as to supplement the quantitative data collected.

### **Ethical considerations**

The respondents were informed that the researcher did not put them in risk directly or indirectly and that their participation was entirely voluntary. The researcher handled the responses with the highest degree of confidentiality. In order to protect respondents' privacy and confidentiality on potential future opportunities, their names and designations were withheld.

### **Study Findings**

The findings presented in this chapter include; descriptive statistics on the demographic composition of the respondents and correlation analysis to provide answers to the study objectives.

### Findings on the Demographic Compositions

The study assessed the demographic compositions of the respondents who took part in the study from the selected public secondary school in Kampala City and the results are presented in Table 1;

**Table 1: Demographic Composition of Respondents**

Demographic Composition			
Category	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	29	60.4
	Female	19	39.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Level of Education	Masters	5	10.4
	Bachelors	27	56.3
	Diploma	14	29.2
	Certificate	2	4.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Primary data, 2024*

In Table 1, the results indicate that majority of the respondents 29 (60.4%) who participated in the study were male and 19 (39.6%) of the respondents who participated in the study were female. In addition, the study findings revealed that majority of the respondents 27 (56.3%) had attained a bachelors' level of education, followed by 14 (29.2%) of the respondents who had attained a diploma level of education, then 5 (10.4%) of the respondents who had attained a masters' level of education, and only a few 2 (4.1%) of the respondents had attained a certificate level of education.

### Findings on the Objectives of the Study

This section presents the findings in relation to the specific study objectives.

### Relationship between Depression and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kampala City, Uganda

The study sought to assess the relationship between depression and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda. The relationship was analyzed using Spearman's Rank correlation analysis and the findings are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis on the Relationship between Depression and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kampala City, Uganda**

		Depression	Students' Academic Performance
Depression	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.547**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	48	48

<b>Students' Academic Performance</b>	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	-.547**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	48	48

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Primary data, 2024**

The findings in Table 2 revealed that there is a moderately negative and statistically significant relationship between depression and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda ( $r = -0.547$ ,  $N = 48$ ,  $P\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) at a 0.01 level of significance. The findings imply that a reduction in depression considerably and significantly leads to an improvement in students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

In regards to depression and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda, some of the key informants asserted that;

*"...depression often impairs concentration and focus, making it difficult for students to pay attention during classes, follow lessons, and complete assignments which affects their overall academic performance."* (KI 07)

*"Depressed students may struggle with memory retention, affecting their ability to recall information during tests and while studying which affects students' academic performance."* (KI 01)

*"A lack of motivation is a common symptom of depression. Students may feel a sense of hopelessness or disinterest in schoolwork, leading to procrastination and incomplete assignments."* (KI 01)

*"Depression can cause fatigue and low energy, making it challenging for students to participate in class activities and complete homework which affects students' academic performance."* (KI 05)

*"...low self-esteem and negative self-perception associated with depression can reduce students' confidence in their academic abilities, leading to poor students' academic performance at the school."* (KI 03)

*"Depression may cause irritability and frustration, leading to behavioral problems in class and potential disciplinary actions that disrupt learning and this might result into poor students' academic performance at the school."* (KI 02)

**Relationship between Anxiety Disorders and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kampala City, Uganda**

The study also sought to explore the relationship between anxiety disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda. The relationship was analyzed using Spearman's Rank correlation analysis and the results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis on the Relationship between Anxiety Disorders and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kampala City, Uganda**

		Anxiety Disorders	Students' Academic Performance
<b>Anxiety Disorders</b>	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.724**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	48	48
<b>Students' Academic Performance</b>	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	-.724**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	48	48

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### Source: Primary data, 2024

The findings in Table 3 revealed that there is a very strong negative and statistically significant relationship between anxiety disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda ( $r = -0.724$ ,  $N = 48$ ,  $P\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) at a 0.01 level of significance. The findings imply that a decrease in anxiety disorders strongly and significantly leads to an improvement in students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

In accordance to anxiety disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda, some of the key informants had this to say;

*"Many students with anxiety disorders experience heightened stress during exams, leading to panic attacks, difficulty recalling information, and poor test and exam performance."* (KI 04)

*"...anxiety may lead students to avoid situations that trigger their anxiety, such as participating in class discussions, attending school, or engaging in group work, which can hinder their learning and academic progress."* (KI 07)

*"High levels of anxiety can interfere with working memory and cognitive processing, making it harder for students to learn new material and retain information and this can significantly affect students' academic performance at the school."* (KI 01)

*"Students with anxiety disorders may have increased absenteeism due to fear of social situations, school-related stress, or panic attacks, resulting in missed instructional time and falling behind in coursework thus leading to poor students' academic performance at the school."* (KI 03)

#### Relationship between Bipolar Disorders and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kampala City, Uganda

The study further sought to assess the relationship between bipolar disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda. The relationship was analyzed using Spearman's Rank correlation analysis and the results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Correlation Analysis on the Relationship between Bipolar Disorders and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kampala City, Uganda**

		Bipolar Disorders	Students' Academic Performance
<b>Bipolar Disorders</b>	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.692**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	48	48
<b>Students' Academic Performance</b>	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	-.692**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	48	48

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Source: Primary data, 2024*

The findings in Table 4 revealed that there is a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between bipolar disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda ( $r = -0.692$ ,  $N = 48$ ,  $P\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) at a 0.01 level of significance. The findings imply that a decrease in bipolar disorders strongly and significantly leads to an improvement in students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

In relation to bipolar disorders and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda, some of the key informants argued that;

*"During depressive episodes, students may struggle with concentration and attention, while during manic episodes, they may have racing thoughts and be easily distracted which might affect students' academic performance at the school."* (KI 08)

*"The rapid changes in mood associated with bipolar disorder can result in inconsistent academic performance. A student might perform well during stable periods but poorly during mood swings at the school."* (KI 05)

*"...severe mood episodes can lead to increased absenteeism. Depressive episodes might cause students to miss school due to feelings of hopelessness, while manic episodes might lead to erratic behavior that result in disciplinary actions or voluntary absence thus poor students' academic performance."* (KI 02)

*"Mood swings as a result of bipolar disorder can affect relationships with peers and teachers, leading to social isolation or conflicts, which can further impact learning and classroom dynamics thus affecting students' academic performance at school."* (KI 07)

## Conclusion

The study concludes that mental health in form of depression, anxiety disorders, and bipolar disorders has a statistically significant association with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda in that a reduction in the different forms of mental health will resultantly lead to an improvement in students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

## Recommendations

The study recommends that the government through the Ministry of Education should integrate mental health education into the curriculum to help students understand and manage their emotions, stress, depression, anxiety, and mental health issues as this would influence an improvement in students' academic performance in schools in the country including public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

The study also recommends that the schools administrators and parents should ensure that students have access to counselors and psychologists who can provide support and intervention for students dealing with mental health challenges thus this might influence an improvement in students' academic performance in Public secondary schools in Kampala City, Uganda.

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