

Parental Involvement and Student Retention in Universal Secondary Education
Schools in Amuru District, Northern Uganda

By

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Declaration

I, Lilly Amono, hereby declare that this Dissertation entitled “Parental Involvement and Student Retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District, Northern Uganda” is my original work and has never been submitted to any institution or University for an academic award. Due acknowledgement has been made for the work of others in this work through quotations and references.

Signed 

Date 29/8/2025

Lilly Amono

Approval

This Dissertation entitled “Parental Involvement and Student Retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District, Northern Uganda” has been submitted in partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Degree of Master of Education in Education Management of Gulu University with our approval as the supervisors.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my father, Mr. ACOKA Wilson, whose unconditional support and motivation have been a cornerstone of my academic journey and to my lovely children Anena Promise, Victor, Timothy, and Noelin—thank you for persevering during my absence and being my inspiration and my reason to strive for success.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Approval	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
Abstract	xii
Chapter One	1
Introduction.....	1
1.0 Overview	1
1.1 Background	1
1.1.1 Historical Background.....	1
1.1.2 Theoretical Background	4
1.1.3 Conceptual Background	7
1.1.4 Contextual Background	9
1.2 Statement of the Problem	10
1.3 Purpose of the Study	11
1.4 Objectives of the Study	11
1.5 Research Questions	12
1.6 Research Hypotheses.....	12
1.7 Significance of the Study	13
1.8 Scope of the Study.....	13
1.8 Conceptual Framework	14
Chapter Two.....	16
Literature Review.....	16
2.0 Introduction	16
2.1.0 Review of Empirical Literature.....	16
2.1.1 Theoretical Review	16
2.2.0 Review of Empirical Literature	24
2.2.1 Parents’ provision of school needs and Student Retention.....	24

2.2.2 Parents' payment of Supplementary fees and Student Retention.....	25
2.2.3 Parental follow-up and Student Retention.....	27
2.2.4 Parents' participation in School meetings and Student Retention.....	28
2.3 Summary of Literature Review	30
Chapter Three.....	31
Methodology	31
3.0 Introduction	31
3.1 Research Approach	31
3.2 Research Design.....	31
3.3 Population of Study.....	32
3.4 Sample Size	32
3.4.2 Sampling Techniques	33
3.5 Data Collection Methods/Instruments.....	34
3.5.1 Questionnaire Survey/Questionnaires	34
3.5.2 Interview/Interview Guide.....	34
3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Study Instrument.....	35
3.6.1 Validity of the Study Instruments.....	35
3.7.2 Reliability of the Study Instruments	36
3.8 Data Collection Procedure	36
3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation.....	37
3.9.1 Quantitative Data Analysis	37
3.9.2 Qualitative Data Analysis	38
3.10 Measurement of Variables	39
3.11 Role of Researcher	39
3.12 Ethical Consideration	39
3.13 Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations	40
Chapter Four	42
Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation.....	42
4.0 Introduction	42
4.1 Response rate.....	42
4.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents.....	43

4.2 Amuru District USE Enrollment	46
Proportion of 2020 S1 intake and number of students who sat for S4 after four years in 2024.....	46
4.3 Parents’ Involvement in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District...	46
4.4 Student Retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District	54
4.5 Relationship between parents’ provision of school needs and students’ retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.....	57
4.5.1 Thematic Analysis of Parental Provision of School Needs and Student Retention....	58
4.5.1.1 Introduction	58
4.5.1.2 Material Support	58
4.5.1.3 Student Motivation	59
4.5.1.4 Peer Influence and Accountability	61
4.5.1.5 Classroom Dynamics	62
4.6 Relationship between parents’ payment of supplementary fees and students’ retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.....	63
4.6.1 Thematic Analysis of Parental Payment of Supplementary Fees and Student Retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District.....	64
4.6.1.1 Introduction	64
4.6.1.2 Importance of Supplementary Fees.....	65
4.6.1.3 Financial Stability	66
4.6.1.4 Educational Equity	66
4.6.1.5 Student Morale	67
4.7 Objective 3: Effect of parents’ follow up of their children in schools and students’ retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.....	67
4.7.1 Thematic Analysis of Parental Follow-Up and Student Retention in Amuru District Secondary Schools	69
4.7.1.1 Introduction	69
4.7.1.2 Student Motivation	69
4.7.1.3 Support during Challenging times.....	70
4.7.1.4 Intrinsic Motivation	70
4.7.1.5 Student’s Participation in class.....	71

4.7.1.6 Discipline.....	72
4.8 Objective 4: To establish the relationship between parents’ participation in school meetings and students’ retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.....	73
4.8.1 Thematic Analysis of Parental Participation in School Meetings and Student Retention.....	75
4.8.1.1 Introduction	75
4.8.1.2 Collaboration	75
4.8.1.3 School governance.....	76
4.8.1.4 Student Engagement	78
4.9 Analysis of ANOVA Results for Factors Influencing Student Retention.....	79
4.10 Analysis of Coefficients Influencing Student Retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools	80
Chapter Five.....	83
Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations	83
5.0 Introduction	83
5.1 Discussion	83
5.1.1 Relationship between parents’ provision of school needs and students’ retention rate in USE schools.....	83
5.1.2 Relationship between parents’ payment of supplementary fees and students’ retention rate in USE schools	85
5.1.3 Effect of parents’ follow-up of their children in schools and students’ retention rate in USE schools.....	87
5.1.4 Relationship between parents’ participation in school meetings and students’ retention rate in USE schools	89
5.2 Summary	91
5.3 Conclusion.....	92
5.4 Recommendations	92
5.5 Areas for Further Studies	93
References.....	94
Appendices.....	104
Appendix A: Table for Determining Sample Size from a given Population	104

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Teachers.....	105
Appendix C: Questionnaire for Student Leaders and Students.....	108
Appendix E: Interview Guide for Headteachers/Deputy Headteachers, BOG, PTA Representatives and student leaders	111
Appendix F: Work Plan for Research Proposal	114
Appendix G: Introductory Letter.....	115

List of Tables

Table 1: Study population and Sample size of the respondents.....	32
Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Teachers and Students	44
Table 3: Amuru District USE Enrollment between the period 2020 and 2024	46
Table 4: Parents’ Involvement.....	47
Table 5: Participation in school meetings and Parents’ follow-up of children.....	49
Table 6: Descriptive Statistics on Parents’ Involvement	51
Table 7: Student Retention.....	54
Table 8: Descriptive Statistics on Student Retention.....	55
Table 9: Research questions 1: What is the relationship between Parents’ provision of school needs and Students’ Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?	57
Table 10: Research question 2: To what extent does Parents’ payment of supplementary fees influence Students’ Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?	63
Table 11: Research question 3: How does Parents’ follow up of learners affect Students’ Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?	68
Table 12: Research question 4: What is the relationship between Parents’ participation in school meetings and Students’ Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?.....	74
Table 13: Analysis of ANOVA Results for Factors Influencing Student Retention	79
Table 14: Analysis of Coefficients Influencing Student Retention	80

List of Figures

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework showing relationship between parental involvement and students' retention in Universal Secondary Education schools	14
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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between parental involvement and student retention in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District, Northern Uganda. The primary aim was to understand how various dimensions of parental engagement specifically, the provision of school needs, payment of supplementary fees, parental follow-up, and participation in school meetings impact students' retention rates. The study adopted a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, with a sample space of 538 respondents, including students leaders, student, teachers, and school administrators. This combination allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter. The objectives of the study were determining the extent to which parents' provision of school needs correlates with students' retention rates, exploring how payment of supplementary fees affects retention, assessing the influence of parental follow-up on students' attendance and persistence, and examining the role of parental participation in school meetings in promoting retention. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews, providing a rich context for understanding the dynamics of parental involvement. Findings revealed significant relationships between each aspect of parental involvement and student retention. Specifically, parents who provision of school had a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.305^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), paid supplementary fees had a weak positive ($r = 0.143^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), while consistent follow-up by parents had a moderate positive ($r = 0.445^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), and active participation in school meetings had a high positive correlation ($r = 0.763^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). these all contributed to improved student persistence. These findings suggested that enhancing parental involvement could serve as a key strategy for improving student retention in USE schools. In conclusion, the study emphasized the critical role that parents played in their children's education, suggesting that targeted interventions aimed at increasing parental involvement could effectively enhance retention rates in USE schools. Recommendations included developing programs to educate parents about their importance in the educational process, encouraging schools to facilitate greater parental engagement, and implementing community initiatives that support families in meeting school-related needs. By fostering stronger partnerships between parents and schools, the educational outcomes for students in Amuru District could be significantly improved.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Overview

Given an opportunity to improve the chances of your child staying in school until the end of a study cycle, would you take it up? For decades, researchers have pointed to one key factor for students' success that transcended nearly all others, such as family background, education policies, attitude towards education, and the kind of school a student attends; that was parental involvement. This study focused on establishing the relationship between parents' involvement and students' retention in Universal Secondary Education schools in Amuru District, Northern Uganda. The independent variable was parental involvement whereas the dependent variable was student retention.

This chapter presented the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study and conceptual framework.

1.1 Background

The background of this study was divided into four parts, namely; Historical background which dealt with the historical perspective of the study; Theoretical background which brought out the theory upon which this study was based; Conceptual background that focused on parental involvement and student retention in schools; and Contextual background which gave the context of this study which was in Universal Secondary Schools in Amuru District.

1.1.1 Historical Background

Student retention had been a critical concern in education systems worldwide, reflecting the ongoing challenges of ensuring that students not only enrolled in schools but also remained until they completed their education. Globally, retention rates fluctuated overtime due to various factors, including economic conditions, social policies, parental support and systemic educational reforms. The importance of parental involvement, in particular, has gained increasing recognition as a critical factor influencing students' motivation, engagement, and

decision to remain in school. Historically, the focus on retention gained momentum in the late 20th century as countries recognized the importance of education in fostering economic development and social equity. According to a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020), the global commitment to universal education was solidified with the adoption of the Education for All (EFA) initiative in the 1990s, which aimed to ensure that all children received a quality education. This global initiative laid the groundwork for subsequent policies aimed at increasing access to secondary education, particularly in developing countries and these efforts acknowledged that parental and community engagement could significantly enhance students' educational experiences and reduce dropout rates.

As nations progressed towards achieving universal secondary education, challenges emerged concerning dropout rates. Various studies highlighted that socioeconomic factor, such as poverty and lack of resources, significantly contributed to high dropout rates (Wenglinsky, 2018). In addition, educational disparities based on gender, ethnicity, and geographic location exacerbated retention issues, particularly in low-income countries. For instance, research by Kaffenberger and Pritchett (2021) emphasized that marginalized groups often faced barriers to completing secondary education due to cultural attitudes, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to educational resources. This trend prompted many countries to implement targeted interventions to address these disparities, thereby promoting higher retention rates.

The late 20th and early 21st centuries saw a significant shift towards the implementation of Universal Secondary Education (USE) policies in various regions, driven by the recognition that secondary education played a crucial role in enhancing individual capabilities and fostering societal development. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the subsequent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasized the need for inclusive and equitable quality education, further reinforcing the commitment to improve student retention in secondary schools (United Nations, 2015). Consequently, countries began to adopt comprehensive strategies to enhance retention rates, focusing on factors such as improving school infrastructure, increasing teacher training, and providing financial support to low-income families.

Research showed that the implementation of USE policies resulted in increased enrollment rates in secondary education. However, retention remained a persistent challenge. A study by Pritchett

and Filmer (2019) highlighted that while enrollment numbers rose, dropout rates often remained high due to underlying issues such as inadequate support systems for students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a response, many countries initiated programs aimed at enhancing student engagement and support, recognizing that addressing retention required a holistic approach that considered both academic and non-academic factors.

In Uganda, the journey towards improving student retention in secondary education were marked by significant milestones and challenges. The introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997 was a pivotal moment, aimed at increasing access to education for all children (Government of Uganda, 1997). This initiative led to a surge in primary school enrollment, laying the foundation for the subsequent push for Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007. The USE program aimed to ensure that every child who completed primary education got the opportunity to continue to secondary school, thereby addressing the educational needs of the growing population.

Despite the progress made through UPE and USE policies, Uganda faced considerable challenges regarding student retention in secondary education. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2020), the transition rate from primary to secondary education was approximately 70%, indicating that a significant number of students who completed primary school did not continue to secondary education. Various factors contributed to this phenomenon, including economic barriers, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of qualified teachers. A study by Mutekanga et al. (2021) found that many students dropped out due to financial constraints, such as the inability to pay for school fees and related expenses. Additionally, cultural factors, such as early marriages and child labor, disproportionately affected girls' retention rates, further complicating the retention landscape.

To address the challenges of student retention in Uganda's secondary schools, various stakeholders, including the government, non-governmental organizations, and communities, implemented a range of interventions. Programs aimed at providing financial assistance to low-income families, improving school infrastructure, and enhancing teacher training, deployment and remuneration in order to create a more supportive educational environment. There has also been interventions by Non-governmental organisations to provide bursaries and scholarships

aimed to provide financial support to disadvantaged students, thereby increasing their chances of remaining in school.

However, despite these efforts, challenges persisted. A report by the World Bank (2021) indicated that even with financial support programs, many students still faced barriers related to socio-cultural factors that impeded their retention in schools. The issue of gender disparities remained a pressing concern, with girls facing additional challenges that hindered their educational pursuits. Studies showed that targeted interventions focusing on girls' education, including mentorship programs and community awareness campaigns, were essential to address these disparities and improved retention rates (Kanyenze et al., 2019) and more recently, research has focused on the specific mechanisms through which parental involvement influences student retention. Supportive parental behaviors, including monitoring academic progress, fostering positive attitudes toward school, and maintaining communication with educators, have been linked to increased student persistence and reduced dropout rates (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Educational policies now emphasize family-school partnerships as vital components in efforts to address dropout challenges and promote continuous enrollment (Henderson & Mapp, 2018).

1.1.2 Theoretical Background

This study was underpinned by the Epstein's theory of parental involvement which categorized parental involvement into home-based involvement, school-based involvement and home-school communication (Fantuzzo, et al., 2000). The theory laid down six types of Involvement. (1) Communicating, (2) Parenting, (3) Volunteering, (4) Decision Making, (5) learning at home, and (6) collaboration with the community (Epstein et al., 2018).

The types of involvement were described as follows: *Parenting*: This included all of the activities that parents engaged in to raise happy, healthy children who become capable students. *Communicating*: This involved sharing of information between parents and school concerning children. *Volunteering*: Parents were recruited and organized to help and support school programmes and students' activities. *Learning at home*: This pertained providing ideas and information to parents about how they could best assist their children with homework and curricular-related decisions and activities. *Decision making*: This referred to including parents in

school decision making through developing parent leaders and representatives. *Collaborating with the community*: This involved identifying and integrating community's services and resources like health, cultural, recreational and social resources to support and strengthen schools, students and their families (Durisic, 2017). This framework was based on findings from many studies about what factors were most effective when it came to children's education (Epstein, 2018). Those six factors had the child in the middle as the main beneficiary of the partnership.

The theory recognized that there were some practices that parents and school conducted separately and some were conducted jointly; early sociological theories emphasized the importance of separating the authority of families and schools (Weber, 1947), their responsibilities (Waller 1932), and the importance for student development of particularistic behaviors in families and universalistic behaviors in schools (Parsons, 1959). Recent sociological, socio-psychological and ecological theories emphasized the interrelated behaviors of families and schools (Litwak and Meyer, 1974; Bronfenbrenner, 1979), towards their shared goal of maximizing children's outcomes (Epstein, 1992).

While scholars had moved towards such a conceptualization of parent involvement, seeking children's education as the shared responsibility of families and schools, there was also evidence that in practice, a deficit approach still pervaded in some contexts (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Moore and Lasky (1999) argued that deficit approaches to parental involvement were still alive and well when it came to inclusion of marginalized groups, single parent and low socio-economic status families. Epstein & Sanders (2006) expressed concern that early work on parental involvement neglected to offer insights about what schools could do to promote more extensive parental involvement. Dietz (1997) argued that when schools limited parental involvement (e.g. fundraising, committee membership), then only a small proportion of parents became involved. As a result, the school neither really involved parents nor reaped the potential benefits from parents' involvement. Instead, a more comprehensive model of parental involvement which elicited a wide variety of parental involvement was advocated (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Epstein and colleagues (Epstein, 1992) thus developed a typology which aimed to comprehensively categorize the variety of involvement activities in which parents could potentially engage.

In informing my study on student retention in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools, I utilized key elements of Epstein's theory of parental involvement, which emphasized the various ways in which parents were engaged in their children's education. This model was particularly relevant to my research as it provided a framework for understanding how parental involvement directly impacted educational attainment, progress, and retention. Epstein's theory served as a guiding lens through which the complexities of parental engagement could be examined, highlighting its significance in fostering an educational environment conducive to student success. By applying this framework, my study aimed to investigate the intricate relationship between parental involvement and student retention, contributing valuable insights to the field of educational research.

One of the primary elements of Epstein's theory that I applied was Parenting, which emphasised the importance of fostering a supportive home environment for learning. This aspect was crucial in my study as it explored how parental involvement at home influenced students' attitudes towards school and their commitment to remain enrolled. Research suggested that when parents provided encouragement and resources, both physical and financial through provision of school needs and payment of supplementary fees, for educational endeavors, students were more likely to develop positive attitudes towards learning and exhibited higher retention rates (Hill & Tyson, 2009). By examining how parents could effectively support their children's education at home, my study aimed to explain the ways in which parenting practices contributed to students' academic success and persistence in secondary education (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

Another significant element of Epstein's model was Communicating, which underscored the need for effective communication between parents and schools. My study considered how regular updates and feedback from schools regarding student progress could help parents engage more effectively in their children's education. Establishing open lines of communication facilitated parental involvement, as it allowed parents to stay informed about their children's academic performance and any challenges they could be facing (Mitra, 2018). The impact of strong communication channels on student retention was profound, as informed parents were better equipped to advocate for their children's needs and promote a supportive educational environment at home. Thus, my research highlighted the importance of communication, through

participating in school meetings and making follow up, in enhancing parental engagement, which in turn would contribute to higher retention rates in USE schools (Mitra, 2018).

The elements of Volunteering and Decisions making were also integral to my research, as it involved parents participating in school activities and governance. By investigating the extent of parental participation in school meetings, volunteering in PTA leadership and other school activities, my study explored how such involvement could enhance their connection to the school community and encouraged students to remain engaged. Research indicated that parental presence in school activities and leadership not only strengthened the relationship between parents and educational institutions but also served as a motivator for students to participate actively in their education (Patrikakou, 2016). This element aligned with the view that active parental involvement significantly influenced students' commitment to their education, thereby improving retention rates. By examining the dynamics of volunteering, my study aimed to provide a distinct understanding of how parental engagement in school activities create a supportive environment for students (Patrikakou, 2016).

1.1.3 Conceptual Background

The independent variable in this study was parents' involvement. According to Child Trends (2012), parents' involvement referred to parents attending school meetings with their children's teachers (communicating); attending school events (collaborating); or volunteering in the school or serving on school committees (Volunteering); parenting (providing school needs and paying supplementary fees). According to the researcher, parental involvement was considered as an initiative made by the parents as part of their responsibility for the children's psychosocial and educational development which would likely relate positively with student retention in USE schools. Izzo et al (2009) in their study, rated parental involvement as frequency of parent-teacher contact; quality of parent-teacher interaction; participation in educational activities at the home; and participation in school activities; Parental involvement meant the parents or guardians of children taking part in their children's education so that their children could access school, attend school and be retained at school until they finish a given level such as S.4 and S.6 and then continue with higher levels of education which the parents could do by executing their responsibilities. Parents were said to be partners, clients, consumers and educational assistants in as far as management of schools was concerned (Thomson, 2011). Desforges (2006) said that

given parental investment in the classroom activities, school activities and functions, and in governance and advice, all the children in the school benefited.

Parental involvement in secondary education referred to the way parents, or caretakers, were engaged in their children's development and performance in education. The level of involvement could be partly visualized through parents' behaviour; parents were to participate in school activities, be a part of the management of the school, provide necessary supplies, support their children with homework at home, bring their children to school and discuss the wellbeing of their children with the teachers. These were examples of how parents constructed a positive learning environment for their children (Gauvain & Perez, 2013).

This study adopted the definition of parental involvement according to Henderson & Mapp, 2002, which referred to parental involvement as the active engagement, participation and support of parents or guardians in their children's learning and schooling activities that encompassed a range of behaviours, attitudes and interactions that promoted academic, social and emotional development of students. This involvement included but was not limited to activities such as assisting with homework, attending school events, communicating with teachers, provision of educational resources and fostering supportive learning environment (Fan & Chen, 2001; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). The study conceptualised parental involvement, according to this definition of '*active engagement, participation and support*', as provision of school needs, payment of supplementary fees, parental follow up of students and participation in school meetings.

The dependent variable was student retention. Student retention occurred when a student enrolled each term till completion, studied full-time, and sat for National Examinations over a specified time duration. The mission of students joining secondary school was for them to obtain certificates that would help them join higher institutions of learning; retaining a student was fundamental to the ability of a school to carry out this mission. Student retention was a major indicator of student and school success within the secondary education community (Braxton, Hirschy & McClendon, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Webster & Showers, 2011). Schools with high retention rates were perceived as providing students with the resources, services and support systems needed to successfully obtain a certificate.

A high rate of attrition (the opposite of retention) was not only a fiscal problem for schools, but a symbolic failure of a school to achieve its purpose (National Center for Health Statistics, 2013). Leaving school without completion could present personal setbacks for students, not just in terms of time and money spent but also because of unfulfilled promises and lost opportunities. In contrast, students who persisted enjoyed tangible benefits such as higher income levels, higher employment rates, better health and longer life expectancy in comparison to those who drop out of school without certificates (National Center for Health Statistics, 2013). While completing secondary education was an aspiration for a million students every year, the road to the finishing line might be too challenging for many. Students who have economic, social, or educational advantages were the least likely to leave school, while students lacking these advantages were the most likely to leave (Berger & Lyon, 2005). However, high school student retention rates, considered to have a greater impact on the financial standing and reputation of an institution, were receiving increased scrutiny (Braxton, et al, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Webster & Showers, 2011).

1.1.4 Contextual Background

The study took place in Amuru District which is located in Northern Uganda, bordered by South Sudan to the north, Adjumani District to the west, Nwoya District to the South-West, Gulu to the East and Omoro District to the South-East and Kitgum District to North-East.

There are thirteen secondary schools in Amuru District out of which five are implementing the USE programme and were chosen for this study. These schools were St. Mary's College Lacor, Keyo Secondary School, Pabbo Secondary School, Lwani Memorial College and Amuru Seed Secondary School. Amuru District Education Officials, both at the district and sub-county levels, were critical to the achievement of their mission which is: to provide all services that facilitate the academic achievements for all school-going children and retaining them in school. The District Education Officer (DEO) and her team have been working hand in hand with the government to establish schools and provide teachers. Retention of learners in schools have been backed by National laws such as the Constitution of Uganda, Article 30 provided for right to education for all persons and Article 34 provided for Rights of children; under subsection 1 provided for children to know and be cared for by their parents and subsection 2 provided that all children were entitled to education under the responsibility of the State and parents. The

Education Act 2008 also provided for basic education to be provided to all and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2010-2015 prioritised UPE and USE. In Amuru District, Council have passed Resolutions and By-laws to charge parents who failed to send their children to school in order to benefit from UPE and USE by giving them a jail term of 6months or fine of UgShs50,000/= (Amuru DLG, 2019).

There were also structures within the schools like PTA and BoG that were aimed to mobilise parents to support their children's stay in schools. In addition, schools also have internal arrangements to mobilise parents to support their children's stay in school through class meetings and PTA annual general meetings, but there was limited support offered by the parents to fully realize this cause as quoted in the monitor publication of Wednesday, August 21, 2019, p.12 whereby Mr. Ocaya Geoffrey, the head teacher of Ogomrac Community Primary School in Atiak Sub-county said teachers in his institution are hardly paid. "Parents are tasked to pay Shs. 10,000 per term, but on many occasions, they cannot afford". The situation was no different in secondary schools.

Amuru District has five schools implementing the USE program which offered a place for every child to have an opportunity to have good education that would lead him or her to a higher level of education in life, but this was becoming a problem because of less parental involvement hence low student retention and achievement. It was against this background that the researcher was compelled to carry out research on the relationship between parents' involvement and student retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Student retention was largely dependent on parental involvement, which included, among others, provision of school needs, payment of supplementary fees, follow up of their children in schools and participation in school meetings. Despite improvements in enrollment rates as a result of the introduction of Universal Secondary Education in Uganda in 2007, only 5 in 10 children completed their secondary cycle (HRMI 2021 Rights Tracker). Whereas the number of S1 students in USE schools in Amuru District in 2018 was 879, the number of S2-S3 students decreased by 10-25% and the number of S4 students was 457 in 2022 (Amuru District Education report, 2022) and this was worsened further by the recent Covid-19 pandemic where many

students did not go back to school after reopening of schools and according to UNEB report of 2020, only 217 students registered to sit for the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) in the year 2020. In addition, USE schools in Amuru District have continued to register high student dropout rates over the last seven years as evidenced by the USE head-count report (MoES January, 2020) which indicated that the total enrollment in Amuru stood at 1,941 putting the dropout rate at 24.6% in 2020. (African Revival Report, 2020). This kind of scenario might have been as a result of limited parental involvement in the education of their children.

Several interventions have been made by both government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to ensure that students remained in schools until they finish a study cycle, among which included: training and provisions of start-up capitals for sustainable ways of income generation so that parents provided basic family needs (food) and pay school fees, Construction of new schools and renovation of old ones, provision of school supplies and bursaries to needy children, Bylaws have been put in place by local governments which were being enforced by political leaders and District Education office. Despite all these interventions, the retention level of students in schools still remained low.

It was against this background that the researcher set out to establish parents' involvement as the factor that determined students' retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to establish the relationship between parental involvement and students' retention in Universal Secondary Education schools in Amuru District.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between parents' provision of school needs and students' retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.
2. To explore the relationship between parents' payment of supplementary fees and students' retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.

3. To assess the effect of parents' follow up of their children in schools and students' retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.
4. To establish the relationship between parents' participation in school meetings and students' retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.

1.5 Research Questions

The study sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between Parents' provision of school needs and Students' Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?
2. To what extent does Parents' payment of supplementary fees influence Students' Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?
3. How does Parents' follow up of learners affect Students' Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?
4. What is the relationship between Parents' participation in school meetings and Students' Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following alternative hypotheses:

- H_{A1}- There is a statistically significant relationship between Parents' provision of school needs and Students' Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District.
- H_{A2}-There is a statistically significant relationship between Parents' payment of supplementary fees and Student s' Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District.
- H_{A3}- There is a statistically significant relationship between Parents' follow up of learners and Students' Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District.
- H_{A4}- There is a statistically significant relationship between Parents' participation in school meetings and Students' Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study would be useful in the following ways:

The study would provide empirical evidence to school management on how parents' involvement related with student retention in their schools and would provide the necessary interventions for involving parents to achieve the desired goals and objectives of both the USE programme and their schools.

The results of this study would also provide suggestions to policy makers at the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and district education officials in Uganda to come up with interventions that will promote parental involvement and enhance student retention in schools.

The study would provide suggestions to head teachers and teachers to promote parents' involvement by including and informing parents of school activities, projects, and co-curricular activities, and seek their input and guidance in educational decisions about their children.

The study would provide information to parents and students about the importance of parental involvement in enhancing student retention and hence help parents love and respect their responsibilities all of which may lead to high retention of their children in school.

The study would add new knowledge to researchers on the relationship between parental involvement and student retention thereby helping to fill in some gaps that previous similar studies have left, and contribute to relevant information, thus acting as a source of reference for future researchers.

1.8 Scope of the Study

Content Scope

The study concentrated on dimensions of parents' involvement (provision of school needs, supplementary fees, parental follow-up and participation in school meetings) and how they related with students' retention in schools implementing Universal Secondary Education program.

Geographical Scope

The study was carried out in schools implementing Universal Secondary Education program in Amuru District. The study targeted the five schools which are implementing the USE

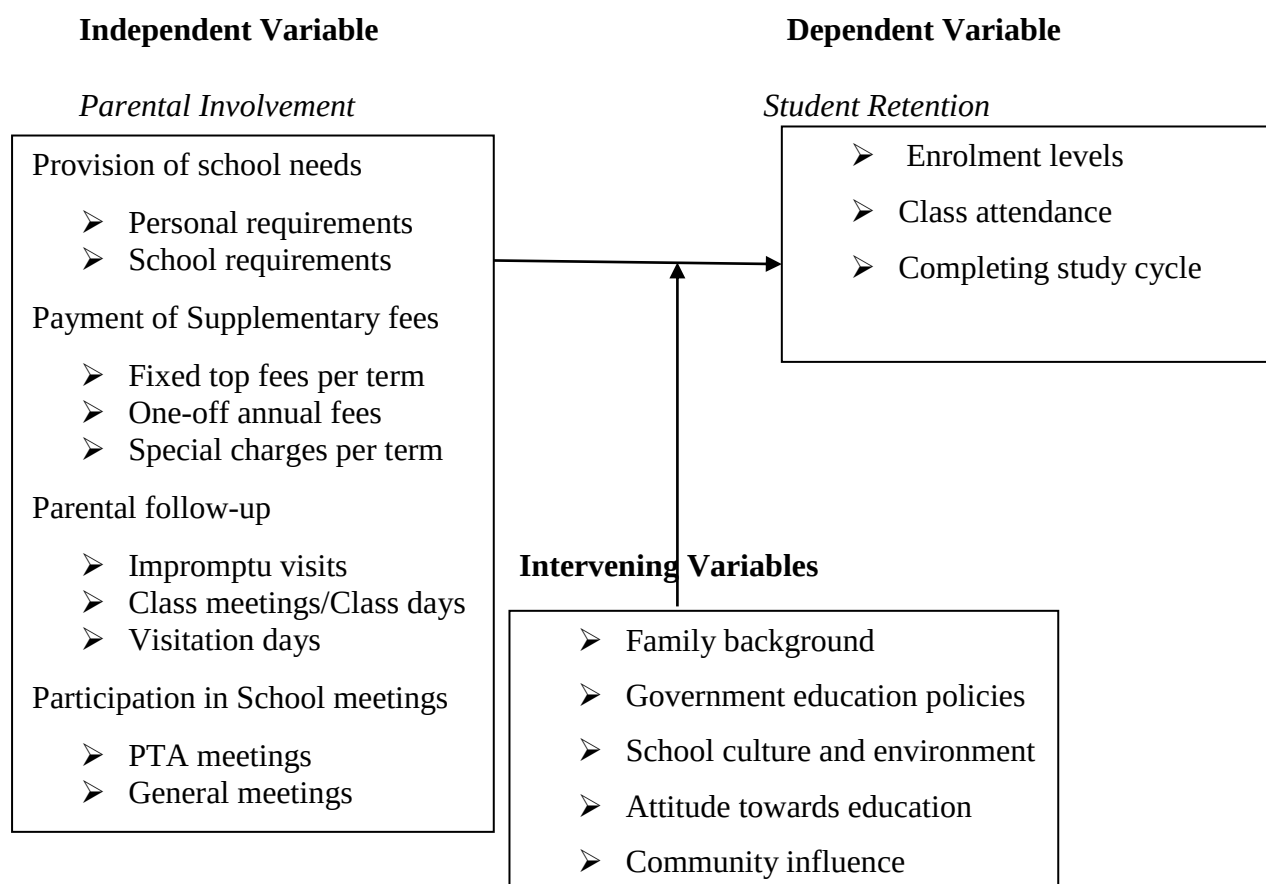
Programme. The choice of this study area was attributed to the fact that student retention had been decreasing since the inception of Universal Secondary Education in Amuru District.

Time School

The study covered a period of four years, stretching from 2019 to 2023 for the secondary data and 2024 for the primary data. This was because of the declining student retention rate in USE schools all over the country, in particular, Amuru District. This was supported by the USE head count reports of 2019-2022. Also, this period was considered in order to assess students' completion rate after a study cycle of 4 years of operation.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

This is the diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the variables under this study and how they have been operationalized for purposes of this research endeavor.



Source: Adopted and modified from Epstein (1995) theory

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework showing relationship between parental involvement and students' retention in Universal Secondary Education schools

The model above illustrated how the different parameters of parents' involvement (provision of school needs, payment of supplementary fees, parental follow-up of learners and participation in school meetings) related with the dependent variable (student retention). Epstein's parental involvement framework directed the study variables by the assertion that the overlapping spheres of influence which focused on the complex interrelationships of family and school affected students' wellbeing and retention in school. The framework showed that parents' involvement in creating surroundings that supported their children encouraged the child's retention in school. It, further, posits that higher levels of parental involvement lead to increased student retention. This occurred when parents assisted their children's schooling by paying fees, assisted with their homework, in regard to materials used in the school programs and attended meetings or volunteered. However, parental involvement was not the only factor that led to student retention; low retention could also be attributed to intervening variables such as family background, government education policies, school culture, community influence and attitude towards education. The effects of these intervening variables on student retention were, however, minimised by combining rigorous measurement, appropriate statistical controls, choice of careful study design, and theoretical clarity, leading to more accurate insights into how parental involvement influenced student retention.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presented a review of related literature on parental involvement (provision of school needs, payment of supplementary fees, parental follow up of students and participation in school meetings) and how they related with student retention in school world over based on scholars' views, opinions and findings from journal articles and empirical researches with a view of throwing more light on the study variables, their relationships and identifying the literature gaps. The first section gave the theoretical review which looked at the theory underpinning this study and its relevance. This was followed by a review of empirical literature in line with the objectives of the study and a summary of the literature review.

2.1.0 Review of Empirical Literature

The different Literatures on parental involvement and how it related to student retention were reviewed under different themes which were taken from the objectives of the study and shown below:

2.1.1 Theoretical Review

This study was underpinned by Epstein's theory of parental involvement. It recognized that there are some duties that parents and schools were to conduct separately and some were conducted jointly towards their shared goal of maximizing children's outcomes (Epstein, 1992). While theorists and researchers have moved towards such a conceptualization of parental involvement, seeking children's education as the shared responsibility of families and schools, there was also evidence that in practice, a deficit approach still pervaded in some contexts (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Moore and Lasky (2001) argued that 'deficit approaches to parental involvement were still alive and well when it came to inclusion of minority, single parent and low socio-economic status families. Epstein & Sanders (2006) expressed concern that early work on parental involvement neglected to offer insights about what schools could do to promote more extensive parental involvement. Dietz (2007) argued that when a school limited parental involvement (e.g.

fundraising, committee membership), then only a small proportion of parents become involved. As a result, the school neither really involved parents nor reaped the potential benefits from parents' involvement. Instead, a more comprehensive model of parental involvement which elicited a wide variety of parental involvement is advocated (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Epstein and colleagues (Epstein, 1992) thus developed a typology which aimed to comprehensively categorize the variety of involvement activities in which parents could be potentially engaged.

According to Epstein theory, parental involvement was categorized into home-based involvement, school-based involvement and home-school communication (Fantuzzo, et al., 2000) and laid down six Types of Involvement," which was launched almost five decades ago (Epstein, 2010). The framework gave rise to a renewed interest in examining home and school collaboration (Punter et al., 2016) as quoted by Raguindin (2020). Further, the groundwork was more frequently outlined in educational inquiry, theory, and practice (Nathans & Revelle, 2013). As to breadth, the categorization was comprehensive and practical in its approach as it comprised three spheres in advancing a learning environment for the children; parents or families, schools, and the community (Nathans & Revelle, 2013; Punter et al., 2016). Epstein's parental involvement model was school-oriented (Punter et al., 2016), making it appropriate for this study. Epstein (2010) proposed the typology that defined different dimensions of parental responsibility in the context of a school partnership into: (1) Communicating, (2) Parenting, (3) Volunteering, (4) Decision Making, (5) learning at home, and (6) collaboration with the community (Epstein et al., 2018); These factors have the child in the middle as the main beneficiary of the partnership; the student was at a maximum advantage to reach their educational goal when there was a mutual, consistent interaction between the school and family. For effective partnership, it was the responsibility of the school administrators to be proactive in engaging parents in the decision-making, instructional practices, and overall advancement of their children (Erdener, 2016; Jay et al., 2017, 2018).

The framework was based on findings from many studies about what factors were most effective when it came to children's education and has revised and improved on the six types of parental involvement framework. The improvement emphasized a partnership between parents and educators as follows:

Parenting referred to parents' basic obligations towards their children. In parenting, it insisted that families should have parenting and child rearing skills, understand child and adolescent development, and set home conditions that support children as students. For example, parents played a key role in helping students to get to school on time every day, providing them with guidance, supervision and materials. Schools could help families understand and carry out this parenting responsibility in a number of ways (Epstein, 2002; Epstein 1998). With this aspect, all families could establish home environments which were conducive to support children to learning at school, and retain them in school. In recent years, homeschooling and virtual learning have become very popular, making the students' home their classroom (Panaoura, 2021). The first type encouraged the students to realize the importance of respect and good family values. It helped the parents develop efficacy in parenting. For the teachers, it helped them imbibe an understanding of the learners' family background and how diverse it was (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

Communicating referred to sharing knowledge between home and school for example about the child's progress. It also referred to how best to design and conduct an effective two-way communication that is school to home and home to school, about school programmes and children's progress. This would bridge the gap between parents and schools, which existed due to inadequate information between parents and teachers. It could be achieved through conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed. Part of parents' names and contact to appear in students' admission forms, there should be special desk to ask parents to register again as the way to track their commitment into serving the school. Most schools have parent-teacher conferences, for example the PTA Annual General Meeting, built into the school year calendar. During these conferences, the teacher typically updated parents about the student's progress and other school activities. These conferences usually were scheduled towards the end or at the beginning of the year and most conversations during the parent-teacher meetings were teacher-centered. To activate an effective parent-teacher/family-school communication link, meaningful and consistent communication channels needed to be open throughout the school year (Butler et al., 2019). Jay et al. (2018) highlighted effective communication as one of the strategies to enhance student's learning. Epstein entailed that this level of engagement was influenced by creating school to-home and home-to-school communication between the parents and teachers about programs in school and the children's

educational performances. Communication strategies that foster the relationship included organizing conferences periodically and providing language translation if/when needed. Also, passing information through various means (phone calls, newsletters, letters, emails, and other valuable means of communication) benefited the students and all the parties involved (Epstein et al., 2018; Newman, et al., 2019).

Volunteering meant parental involvement in school activities such as helping in the classroom for example as volunteer teacher, attending school occasions and meetings etc. Parents could be recruited and organized for help and support. It was believed that, most parents are professionals and others were businessmen/women while others were talented in various aspects, so they should be organized to start volunteering to help teachers in various aspects. This reduced the burden teachers experience when monitoring students' progress (Epstein, 2002; Burke, 1998). This typology allowed the students to witness how the school community members were collective in carrying out school programs with the parents to internalize the complexities of curriculum implementation, and the teachers acquired a readiness to engage the parents in attaining the educational targets.

Learning at home activities such as helping in homework, talking to the child about school and learning, providing encouragement etc. provided information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning. In practice, this might seem difficult but (Epstein 1998) provided workable sample practices. These included provision of information for families on skills and ideas required for students in all subjects at each level/form; information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home; information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments, provision of regular schedule of homework that required students to discuss and interact with families on what they were learning in class; calendars with activities for parents and students at home, family mathematics, science, and reading activities at school, holiday learning packages or activities; family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for high schools so as to keep them aware of future obligations and creating desire to see their children's future (Newman et al., 2019). Other learning-at-home practices included listening, discussing, monitoring, guiding, motivating, praising, and encouraging (Epstein et al., 2018). This involvement caused the students to extend their love for learning even

at home, for parents and guardians to support their children with their take homework, and let the teacher recognize the diversity of their pupils' home setting.

Decision making meant involvement in organization or planning in the school, such as on parents' associations or councils. It involved including parents in school decisions and to developing parent leaders and representatives. Here, families were involved in school-wide decisions, governing boards, advisory councils, advocacy groups, committees for parents to participate in leadership roles (Epstein et al., 2018). The school and district shared the overall goal with the parents, hear the parents' view, then build a partnership working together with a shared view towards a shared goal. Stakeholders sharing the unified goal of student's achievement eliminated any conflicting objectives. The typology provided understanding and engagement about school decisions; for the parents, it created ownership of the decisions they make for their children's schooling, and for the teachers, their leadership capacity is expanded.

Collaborating with parents within the same community, community working together and exchanging information in the best interests of the children. Collaborating with the community pertained to identifying and integrating communities' services and resources to support and strengthen schools, students, and their families. A vast body of research revealed that, for maximum learning to occur for any child, there must be a form of constructive collaboration between the educator, the parents, and the school (Povey et al., 2016; Yamamoto et al., 2016) in Palemo (2022). The teachers and the school, as a whole, were responsible for planning activities, projects, and creating a collaborative structure and environment for the parents. Collaboration with the community involved coordination of information for students and families about programs and activities on health, recreation, and skills acquisition that were available through the community and for the community. Some services and partnerships were funded for free, such as childcare, civic, counseling, tutoring, mentoring, and other businesses. As per Epstein et al., the community did not necessarily only mean the geographical neighborhood of the school or the student's home. Community collaboration expanded the experiences of school children, extended interaction of parents, and increased teachers' knowledge and awareness of resources toward enriching curriculum and instruction (Epstein, 2010).

In each category of parental involvement, the parent's self-efficacy alone was insufficient to build and achieve student achievement and retention (Epstein, 2018; Mahuro & Hungi, 2016). Productive relationships with the teacher and the school were a crucial element in effective parental involvement.

Each of these factors could lead to various results for students, parents, teaching practices and the school climate. In addition, each factor included many different practices of partnership. Lastly, each factor posed challenges to involve all families and those challenges must be met. That is why Epstein (2009) considered it to be important for each school to choose what factors were believed to be most likely to assist the school in reaching its goals for academic success, and to develop a climate of alliance between homes and the schools. Even though the main focus of these six factors was to promote academic achievements, they also contributed to various results for both parents and teachers (Epstein, 2002).

When looked critically the model had practical applicability in guiding how the parents should play their roles in guiding the students learning to realize good academic achievement. Epstein's framework was comprehensive and practically oriented, allowing schools to implement targeted strategies to foster parental involvement across multiple domains. Its emphasis on collaboration among parents, schools, and communities aligns with contemporary views of holistic education and community engagement (Nathans & Revelle, 2013; Punter et al., 2016). The typology's clarity and inclusiveness make it a valuable tool for guiding policy and practice aimed at improving student retention. It was then apparent that those schools which strengthened the communication between the teachers and the parents were able to communicate on the factors that might impede the students' education development and the early intervention might be set by parents at home like being close to their children and making follow up to ensure they remain in school until the end of their study cycle. But this could only be informed through the school report to the parents. This meant that the schools which failed to provide comprehensive report to the parents were hindering the student retention because the parents cannot know what measures they should take about their sons and daughters on learning.

From this theoretical background, it was apparent that, in a school setting, some parents might willingly provide school needs, pay supplementary fees, make follow up on their children at

school to know their progress in academics and other behaviours, as well as attend school meetings while others might not. Epstein (1992) stated that the overlapping spheres of influence which focussed on the complex interrelationships of family and school affect student's wellbeing, academic performance and retention. The ultimate influence on student retention was willful parental involvement in students' education that could yield good results. This theory also implied that if parents willingly partnered with the school administration, by establishing a home environment that supported children as students, good communication about school programs and children's progress; participated in decision making, volunteered to provide the necessities that fathom the students' academics, made follow up on their children while at school, then there would be high student retention. The parameters under parental involvement were considered to be factors influencing student retention in USE schools. However, it must also be acknowledged that the presence of other factors under the intervening variable could also have influenced on student retention.

Epstein developed these categories of parental involvement to help schools improve parental involvement practices, and in turn, improve student achievement. Epstein (1995) pointed out that the involvement of families, schools, and community improved the school climate and made parents more likely to become involved. Epstein worked with colleagues to study the effects of using the six types of involvement on absenteeism and student achievement. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found that attendance improved when schools implement positive activities that support good attendance and effective home-school connections. This study surveyed school officials about their practices designed to reach out to parents or community groups to improve or maintain student attendance". Respondents were also asked to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices. The study showed that some family activities were consistently associated with higher attendance rates including having workshops for parents, communicating with parents, and providing parents with school contacts.

Despite its strengths, Epstein's model has faced critique on several fronts, for instance, on being *School-Centric Bias*: The model predominantly positioned schools as the primary facilitators of parental involvement, potentially underestimating the capacity and agency of families, especially those facing socio-economic or cultural barriers (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Moore & Lasky, 2001). This could lead to a deficit perspective that blamed families for non-involvement rather

than addressing systemic barriers; *Limited Cultural Sensitivity*: Epstein's typology was developed largely within Western contexts and may not fully accommodate diverse cultural norms and parenting styles. For example, the emphasis on volunteering and decision-making roles might not resonate or be accessible to families from different cultural backgrounds, thereby limiting its universal applicability; *Overemphasis on Formal Engagement*: The model emphasized structured activities such as volunteering and formal communication, which overlooked informal and culturally specific forms of parental involvement that were equally impactful but less visible or recognized within the framework; *Assumption of Willingness and Capacity*: The model presumed that parents were willing and able to participate actively, which might not hold true in contexts of economic hardship, parental illiteracy, or work constraints. As a result, the model might inadvertently marginalize less-involved parents and overlooked the structural factors influencing involvement; *Potential for Overburdening Schools*: Implementing all six types of involvement could place additional responsibilities on schools, particularly those with limited resources, potentially leading to superficial engagement rather than meaningful partnership (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

While Epstein's typology provided a structured approach to parental involvement, it was imperative to critically assess its limitations and adapt it to diverse contexts. For instance, research indicated that a deficit approach focusing solely on increasing parental involvement without addressing underlying socio-economic and cultural barriers might not effectively improve student retention (Moore & Lasky, 2001). Moreover, the model's emphasis on school-led initiatives risks overlooking the agency of families and communities, especially marginalized groups. Contemporary critiques suggested that parental involvement models should incorporate a more nuanced understanding of family dynamics, cultural diversity, and structural inequalities. For example, integrating community-based participatory approaches or culturally responsive frameworks could enhance relevance and effectiveness.

Given these critiques, this study adopted Epstein's framework as a guiding model but remained attentive to its limitations. It recognized that fostering parental involvement required not only implementing structured activities but also addressing contextual barriers and empowering families within their cultural and socio-economic realities. Consequently, the study emphasized a

flexible, culturally sensitive approach to parental engagement that aligned with local contexts to improve student retention outcomes.

2.2.0 Review of Empirical Literature

The different Literatures on parental involvement and how it related to student retention were reviewed under different themes which were taken from the objectives of the study and shown below:

2.2.1 Parents' provision of school needs and Student Retention

School needs encompassed children's requirements provided by parents beyond school fees, including personal essentials such as clothing, meals, medical care, as well as school-specific items like uniforms, stationery, and learning materials. Parental involvement in fulfilling these needs remained a critical factor influencing student retention, particularly in resource-constrained settings. While policies like the Universal Secondary Education (USE) aimed to reduce financial barriers to secondary schooling (MOES, 2008), evidence suggested that hidden costs still hindered student continuation. For instance, Oketch et al. (2020) argued that despite official free education policies, indirect costs such as uniforms, meals, transport, and learning materials posed significant challenges for impoverished families, often leading to dropout (World Bank, 2021). This underscored the importance of parental support in providing these essentials to ensure sustained student engagement. Therefore, the current study would establish the relationship between parents' provision of school needs and student retention in USE schools in Amuru District.

Recent studies underscored the positive relationship between parental provision of school needs and student retention. Phaustine, Stanley & Simon (2023), in a study conducted in Busia County, Kenya, found a significant positive correlation between parents' provision of basic needs and learner retention in secondary schools. Their mixed-method approach revealed that students whose parents supplied scholastic materials, uniforms, and meals were more likely to remain in school. The authors emphasized that addressing these needs could mitigate dropout rates driven by economic hardships. The above study however only delved in Kenya; while this study widened the scope to investigate the effect of parents' provision of basic needs on students retention in Amuru District, Uganda in order to narrow the geographic gap.

Similarly, Nampota (2022) investigated the influence of parental support on students' academic persistence in Malawi. The study demonstrated that parental provision of learning materials and emotional support significantly increased students' motivation and attendance, thereby reducing dropout rates. The research highlighted that parental engagement in fulfilling school needs fostered a conducive learning environment and encouraged students to persevere despite socioeconomic challenges. This study was conducted in Malawi, while this study was conducted in Uganda.

In Uganda, Lukendo (2011) examined parental contributions at the primary level in Bubulo East County, finding that provision of scholastic materials such as exercise books and writing tools directly impacted students' performance and motivation, which in turn influenced retention. Although conducted in primary schools, this study aligns with recent findings emphasizing the importance of material support in secondary education contexts (Mutebi & Namusoke, 2022). These newer studies suggested that providing basic school needs remains a vital factor in sustaining student enrollment and success.

In summary, current literature consistently indicated that parental provision of school needs; clothing, learning materials, and nutritional support played a crucial role in student retention across various educational levels and contexts. Addressing these needs through targeted policies and community support mechanisms could significantly reduce dropout rates, especially among economically disadvantaged populations.

2.2.2 Parents' payment of Supplementary fees and Student Retention

School fees were critical for facilitating students' access to quality education, covering costs such as instructional materials, infrastructure maintenance, and specialized programs. However, the burden of supplementary fees had historically been a significant barrier to enrollment and retention, especially among economically disadvantaged populations. While some argued that fees contributed to improving educational quality, numerous studies highlighted their negative impact on student retention (World Bank, 2009; Tinker et al., 2013).

Research consistently demonstrated that parents' ability to pay supplementary fees strongly influenced students' continued enrollment. For instance, Kanyongo (2005) noted that in many developing countries, the introduction of school fees, designed to supplement government

funding, inadvertently limited access for poorer families, leading to increased dropout rates. In Sub-Saharan Africa, ongoing efforts to abolish school fees aimed to improve universal access; however, systemic financial constraints often impeded these initiatives (Amoako & Abekah-Nkrumah, 2021). When parents faced financial difficulties, children were often withdrawn from school or forced to engage in informal economic activities such as hawking or farming to cover education costs, which hampered attendance and retention (Eamon, 2005).

In the context of Uganda, particularly in Amuru District, many students missed school days or entire terms due to economic hardships that compelled them to participate in subsistence farming or other income-generating activities. These circumstances were exacerbated by low socioeconomic status, which limited access to vital instructional resources and created additional stress within households (Eamon, 2005). Such financial stressors could diminish academic motivation and increased dropout risks.

Recent studies have further elucidated the role of parental financial support in secondary education. Achieng & Njui (2020), in their study in Migori County, Kenya, investigated parental participation in free day secondary education and its impact on student retention. Using a mixed-methods approach, they found that most parents contributed material support, financial assistance, and services towards school expenses. Their findings suggested that active parental involvement, both financial and non-financial, positively correlated with student persistence. The study recommended policy interventions to enhance parental engagement through inclusive planning and decision-making processes (Achieng & Njui, 2020).

Similarly, Lukendo (2011), in her study on primary pupils in Bubulo East County, Uganda, reported that parental payment of school fees significantly boosted student retention. Although conducted at the primary level, her findings aligned with current understanding that fee payments served as a motivation for students to remain in school. Her research emphasized that financial support from parents alleviated stress and encourages consistent attendance, especially in resource-limited settings (Lukendo, 2011).

Contrasting these findings, some scholars argued that reliance on parental payments could perpetuate inequalities and contribute to dropout among poorer families. To address these issues, some countries have adopted policies aimed at reducing or eliminating school fees for secondary

education, with mixed results. Nonetheless, the challenge remained in providing sustainable funding mechanisms to ensure equitable access and retention (Tybout & Hannan, 2022).

In conclusion, recent literature underscored that parental payment of supplementary school fees remained a critical determinant of student retention, especially in resource-constrained environments. Effective policy interventions, community support, and inclusive engagement of parents were essential to mitigate dropout rates associated with financial barriers.

2.2.3 Parental follow-up and Student Retention

Parental follow-up and active engagement were crucial factors influencing student retention in primary and secondary schools. Numerous studies have demonstrated that consistent parental involvement such as regular communication with teachers, monitoring homework, and participating in school activities correlated positively with improved academic performance and increased student persistence (Epstein, 2018; Lynch, 2019). When parents actively followed up with their children's schooling, it fostered a supportive environment that encouraged students to stay motivated and committed to their studies.

Research indicated that parental follow-up contributed to establishing effective partnerships between parents and teachers, which could reduce discipline issues, promote positive attitudes towards learning, and reinforce the value of education within the family (Lynch, 2019). Such engagement also helped bridge cultural and socio-economic gaps that hindered student success, especially in diverse or marginalized communities. Parental involvement signaled to students that their education was valued, which enhanced their emotional attachment to school and encouraged persistence (Epstein, 2018).

A recent exploratory study by Dave (2020) conducted in the United States investigated the relationship between parental engagement and student retention. Analyzing data from 6,438 students across multiple schools, the study found that students whose parents received regular academic and financial updates were 8% more likely to remain enrolled and progress academically than those whose parents did not receive such updates. This highlighted the importance of consistent communication and parental awareness in fostering student retention. However, the study's geographical focus on the United States presented a content gap regarding parental support practices in different cultural contexts and their specific influence on retention.

In the African context, Nthiga (2014) examined strategies used to enhance learner retention in public secondary schools in Embakasi District, Kenya. The study identified several forms of parental involvement including participation in school meetings, support for discipline, contribution to learners' activities, and assistance with academic needs as positively affecting retention rates. Nthiga found that parental support not only helped in maintaining discipline but also ensured students met their educational needs, thereby reducing dropout rates. The study underscored that parental engagement fostered a sense of community and shared responsibility, which were vital for student perseverance (Nthiga, 2014).

Contrasting previous studies, the current research was conducted in Northern Uganda, specifically Amuru District, and focused on parental support strategies such as follow-up, participation in school meetings, and provision of educational needs, rather than discipline or sponsorship alone. While Nthiga's study emphasized parental support in Kenya's secondary schools, this study explored how parental follow-up and engagement influenced retention in the Ugandan secondary school context, considering cultural and systemic differences.

In summary, recent literature affirmed that parental follow-up and active engagement in students' education significantly contributed to improved retention rates. Strengthening parental involvement through regular communication and participation in school activities could serve as vital strategies in reducing dropout rates, especially in resource-limited settings.

2.2.4 Parents' participation in School meetings and Student Retention

Research on parental involvement in schools has continually evolved, emphasizing various forms of engagement such as attending school functions, participating in Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA), and involvement in school management activities. Early studies by Rockwell, Andre, and Hawley (2008), as well as Fajoju et al. (2016), highlighted that parental participation in school meetings and activities positively influenced student outcomes, including retention and academic performance. These studies underscored that active parental engagement fostered a supportive learning environment, enhanced communication between parents and schools, and encouraged students' persistence in their education.

Historically, parental involvement gained momentum in the late 19th century. Following a decline in parental participation during that period, upper and middle-class mothers initiated the

National Congress of Mothers (NCM) in 1897, aimed to promote effective educational strategies for children's academic success (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). This movement laid the foundation for the establishment of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in the early 20th century, which became a vital platform for fostering collaboration between home and school. The PTA's role in advocating for parental involvement has been linked to improved student retention and academic achievement (Hiatt-Michael, 1994).

Recent empirical studies further substantiated these links. Tumwehe (2024) conducted a comprehensive study in Rwamucucu Subcounty, Rukiga District, Uganda, employing mixed methods to examine how parental involvement in school management impacted pupil retention. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation ($r=0.512$, $p=0.01$) between parental participation in school meetings, including School Management Committee (SMC) and PTA meetings, and pupil retention. Additionally, parental involvement in educational activities was positively associated with academic performance ($r=0.477$, $p=0.01$). The study concluded that active parental engagement in school planning and activities enhanced both retention and academic success, recommending increased stakeholder participation in school decision-making processes.

Similarly, Lukendo (2011) explored the influence of parental contributions on primary pupil retention in Bubulo East County, Uganda. The study found that parents' active participation in governance such as attending PTA meetings and serving on school committees significantly improved student retention rates. The findings aligned with prior research, emphasizing that parental involvement in school governance created a conducive environment for student persistence.

Adding to this body of evidence, recent research by Nsubuga and colleagues (2022) examined parental participation in secondary school meetings across Uganda, including the role of parents in school decision-making and their impact on student retention. Their study highlighted that regular attendance at school meetings, active communication with teachers, and involvement in school activities were associated with higher retention rates. The authors argued that fostering strong parent-school relationships through regular engagement was crucial for reducing dropout rates and improving educational outcomes.

While the aforementioned studies provided valuable insights, they differ in methodology and geographical focus. Tumwehe's (2024) study employed a mixed-methods approach in Rwamucucu, whereas Lukendo (2011) utilized a case study in western Uganda. Recent research by Nsubuga et al. (2022) adopted a cross-sectional survey design across multiple districts, including Northern Uganda, providing broader generalizability. However, there remained a need for further research specifically targeting the context of Universal Secondary Schools in Amuru District, to empirically establish the relationship between parents' participation in school meetings and student retention which this study addressed.

2.3 Summary of Literature Review

Emurugat, Eron, Kaahwa, and Gaite (2022) investigated the roles played by parents to promote retention in primary schools in the Busoga Region, Uganda. Their qualitative study involving 71 respondents identified attending meetings, engaging with teachers, paying fees, and contributing to school development as critical parental roles in enhancing retention. The findings aligned with the broader literature emphasizing active parental involvement as essential for student persistence.

Despite the diverse perspectives, existing studies predominantly concentrated on primary education or specific regions, with limited focus on secondary schools, especially within the Ugandan context. Moreover, the causal relationship between parental participation in school meetings and student retention in Universal Secondary Schools (USE) remained underexplored. Some scholars suggested that neglecting parental involvement, including failure to attend meetings and support children academically, materially, emotionally and financially, contributed to low retention; however, empirical evidence validating this assumption was limited. Therefore, this study aimed to fill this gap by investigating the specific influence of parents' participation in school meetings, parents' provision of school needs, parents' follow up of their children and parents' payment of supplementary fees on student retention in USE in Amuru District.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presented the research approach, study design, population of study, sampling method and sample size, data collection methods and instruments. The reliability and validity of the study instruments, data management and presentation followed.

3.1 Research Approach

The study employed a mixed method approach embedded in practicality to clearly understand the phenomenon under investigation (Chawla & Sondhi, 2020). This approach, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), was based on the assumption that combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches best provided an understanding of the research problem. The quantitative approach was characterized by describing phenomena in numbers and measures instead of words (Apuke, 2017). In this approach, data were expressed in numbers and analyzed using statistical methods, with an emphasis on facts and relationships. Quantitative approach could take the form of experimental and non-experimental design, while on the other hand, the qualitative approach focused on gaining a rich, in-depth, and complex understanding of people's experiences, beliefs, and behaviors (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). Data collection involved seeking people's explanations of what they observed, did, believed, or felt (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Mixing the methods facilitated triangulation (Neuman, 2018).

3.2 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was utilized in the study, based on both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. According to Kothari (2004), cross-sectional research described an existing relationship between variables. This design was deemed appropriate as it involved analyzing respondents across a wide spectrum at a specific point of time rather than over a period of time; a cross-sectional survey design acted as the best design to decipher the required study findings, while the use of qualitative methods yielded more information (Vessels & Huitt, 2005). Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. The quantitative approach was

employed due to the variables being measured by numbers and analyzed using statistical procedures (Amin, 2005; Airat, 2014). The objectives of the study were measured using correlation (Pearson Correlation Coefficient) to examine the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in order to determine the strength and direction of the relationship.

3.3 Population of Study

The study was carried out in five secondary schools implementing the Universal Secondary Education (USE) program in Amuru District. These schools had a combined total of 05 head teachers, 153 teachers, 100 student leaders, 2,900 students, 60 Board of Governors (BOG) members, and 45 Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) executive members (Amuru District Education Office, 2022). It was from this population that samples were drawn for the study using the Krejcie and Morgan table, targeting specific groups deemed appropriate for providing reliable information on the various dimensions of the study.

3.4 Sample Size

The table developed by Krejcie and Morgan in 1970 (Amin, 2005) for determining sample size was used by the researcher to arrive at an acceptable sample size. The number of subjects from each category of respondents was determined using this table. The sample size was established at 538 respondents based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling guidelines, which had been modified by the researcher and the samples were picked using the appropriate sampling techniques. A summary of the population, sample size of the respondents and the sampling approaches used in the study was presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Study population and Sample size of the respondents

Population Category	Population	Sample size	Sampling technique
Teachers	153	108	Simple random sampling
Student Leaders	100	80	Simple random Sampling
Students	2500	335	Cluster
Total	2753	523	

Source: Adopted from Krejcie and Morgan (1970), modified by the Researcher (2024).

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

Sampling techniques referred to the procedures the researcher used to select the needed study sample (Amin, 2005). The study employed random sampling, purposive sampling, and cluster sampling. In this research study, seven pools of sample participants were needed and were gained using both probability and non-probability sampling procedures. According to Gall et al. (2007), using both probability and non-probability sampling allowed the researcher to select subjects by means that met the needs of the study being conducted. For the qualitative investigation, the researcher sought to collect data from multiple viewpoints to create a rich and distinct understanding of parental involvement. The quantitative investigation aimed to collect data through simple random sampling and cluster sampling.

Purposive sampling was used for sampling student leaders, classteachers, parent-teacher association (PTA) representatives, and school Board of Governors (BoG) representatives who were carefully interviewed because they were at the heart of school administration and possessed key information that informed this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that purposive sampling is used by an inquirer “because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study.”

Simple random sampling was used to randomly select teachers and student leaders from the study population by assigning to them numbers, from which random selection was done. This was utilized to ensure that individuals had equal chances of selection which reduced selection bias and allowed for generalization of results.

Cluster sampling was employed to sample students who were clustered according to their classes due to their large sample size which reduced time wastage during data collection.

These approaches helped gain a variety of perspectives and experiences on parental involvement at the school through semi-structured interviews and closed-ended Likert-scale survey questionnaires. For this study, participants selected were required to have a current stake in the school and to have served the school for at least one school year as an administrator, teacher, PTA member, or BoG member. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants.

3.5 Data Collection Methods/Instruments

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. For qualitative data, the collection methods primarily involved interviews, while for quantitative data, questionnaires were used.

3.5.1 Questionnaire Survey/Questionnaires

A questionnaire survey is a research method used to collect data from a large number of respondents using structured questions. A set of questionnaires written on paper was administered to the respondents to gather information concerning the study. This method was chosen because it was considered less expensive for data collection and could collect data from a large population within a short period (Amin, 2005).

A uniform self-administered close-ended questionnaire encompassing background information, provision of school needs, payment of supplementary fees, participation in school meetings, and student retention was used. The questionnaire was scored on a Likert scale ranging from (5) for strongly agree, (4) for agree, (3) for not sure, (2) for disagree, and (1) for strongly disagree. Scaled questionnaires eased the process of quantitative data analysis. This instrument was used to collect quantitative data from teachers, students, and student leaders because they could read, analyze, write, and spare time to fill the questionnaires. Questionnaires proved useful as they covered a large number of respondents in a short period, generating reliable data since the respondents answered the questions in their own mood without being influenced by the researcher's presence (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999).

3.5.2 Interview/Interview Guide

The interview method was employed to generate qualitative data using an interview guide. The information obtained supported the quantitative data. Interviews with the target respondents were conducted using the interview guide, with the researcher meeting the respondents and recording all the responses personally (Airat, 2014). An interview guide was used because it provided immediate feedback and allowed for adequate probing.

In this method, upon appointment, the researcher interviewed respondents (student leaders, classteachers, headteachers, BOG, and PTA representatives) face-to-face to obtain in-depth

information on parents' involvement and student retention. Structured interviews comprising a set of question items from which the researcher wished to draw data from the respondents were employed. The interviews with school administrators, classteachers, student leaders and BoG representatives were conducted in English, as they understood and could express themselves adequately using it. Interviews with the PTA representatives were conducted in Luo because, as representatives of parents, the respondents may not have understood and adequately expressed themselves in English. The use of both languages to cater for the diversity of the respondents helped the researcher gain deeper insight into the research problem.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Study Instrument

This subsection examined the quality control of the instruments used in the study. According to Amin (2005), validity referred to the extent to which an instrument measured what it was supposed to measure, while reliability indicated the extent to which a study instrument consistently measured what it was supposed to measure.

3.6.1 Validity of the Study Instruments

The relevance of the questions used to measure variables and the validity of the instrument were tested using the Content Validity Index (CVI). Five judges who are professional and peer researchers scored the relevance of the questions in the instruments in relation to the study variables, and a consensus judgment was recorded for each variable. The CVI was measured using the formula;

$$CVI = \frac{\textit{Agreed items by judges as suitable}}{\textit{Total number of items being judged}}$$

For the instrument to be accepted as valid, the average index needed to be 0.7 or above (Polit and Beck, 2006/2007). For this study, a CVI of 0.87 was obtained which meant the data was valid.

The investigator carried out a pilot study in one of the secondary schools in Amuru District. According to Isaac and Michael (1995), a 10% sample of the anticipated sample for the actual study was adequate for piloting. The particular school selected offered an environment and population alike to the envisioned population for the study and was not part of the ultimate investigation. During the piloting of this study, 50 respondents were issued the questionnaires.

The pretest investigation was vital in testing the reliability and validity of the instruments and helped to make any modifications to the instruments before the ultimate study. Additionally, it enabled the researcher to identify the limitations likely to be faced in the field during the main study.

Validity was also achieved through ensuring clear definition and operationalization of the objectives. The researcher also worked with peers and professional researchers to analyze the items in the tools and check the accuracy as well as whether the tools adequately covered all the objectives and variables of this study.

3.7.2 Reliability of the Study Instruments

The internal consistency and reliability of the instruments were measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, taking only variables with a high alpha coefficient as acceptable for social science research (Amin, 2005). Reliability was expressed numerically, usually as a reliability coefficient ranging between 0.00-1.00. Using the results of the study, the reliability of each instrument was computed in terms of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, using SPSS version 27. According to George and Mallery (2003), for an instrument to be accepted as reliable, its Cronbach Alpha coefficient should be greater than 0.70. For this study, the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was computed to be 0.782 which was acceptable.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

A letter of introduction was obtained from Gulu University, Institute of Research and Graduate Studies, allowing the researcher to proceed to the field for the purposes of conducting the research.

The cover letter from Gulu University was attached to the questionnaires (Sekaran, 2003) and was used for introductory purposes in the selected schools for the research endeavor and the school administrators granted permission to the researcher to conduct the research in their schools.

For this research study, two data collection approaches were utilized. The first approach was quantitative in the form of Likert-scale survey questionnaires. The questionnaires were

physically delivered to the target respondents, who then sorted, edited, coded, and entered the data into SPSS for analysis.

The second approach was qualitative in the form of semi-structured interviews, requiring participants to be current stakeholders in the school and to have served in the school for at least one year. The selected participants were first contacted by the school administrators to ensure their willingness and availability to participate in the qualitative investigation. Consent letters were given to all participants with adequate time to review the details of their participation. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants. After that, the researcher scheduled the interviews by phone. The researcher conducted the semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the stakeholders at a convenient location for the participants that allowed for privacy and confidentiality. These two approaches provided triangulation, which was a vital process that researchers used to generate findings and validate that they were validated using multiple data collection techniques (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2007; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014).

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

In the process of data analysis, relationships or differences supporting or conflicting with original or new hypotheses were subjected to statistical tests of significance to determine the differences.

3.9.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey instrument employed a five-point Likert-scale that included the following measures: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS Version 27.0 which utilized both Descriptive and inferential statistics approaches at three levels namely; Univariate, Bivariate, and Multivariate.

At the Univariate level, descriptive statistics was used to present categorical data in terms of frequencies, means, and standard deviations. According to Gall et al. (2007), descriptive statistics allowed researchers to organize and summarize sets of numerical data using mathematical techniques, which was appropriate for this study. At the bivariate level, Inferential statistics transformed categorical data from questionnaires into continuous data and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient with a 1% significance level (p value of 0.01) was used to establish the relationship between parent's provision of school needs and student retention;

Parent's payment of supplementary fees and student retention; parent's participation in school meetings and student retention; and parent's follow up and student retention by establishing the direction and strength of the relationships. At the multivariate, ANOVA (Analysis of variance, specifically multiple linear regression analysis) was used to ascertain the combined impacts of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Regression analysis addressed respective research hypothesis.

3.9.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Data analysis of the interview data utilized thematic analysis. The text from the interview was closely examined to identify common themes, i.e., topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that came up repeatedly (Caulfield, 2019). The researcher went through familiarization, coding, generating themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Interview data was categorized into themes using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method as adapted by Creswell and Poth (2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of structured qualitative analysis was the "most practical and useful approach." This method of data analysis was appropriate for this study because it bracketed the researcher out of the study by identifying their own personal experiences and biases upfront so that the researcher could focus on the participants' experiences objectively (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After transcribing the interviews, the researcher reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy. Next, the researcher went through each response and used open coding procedures. Open coding required the researcher to code "the data for its major categories of information" (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Coding was defined as a process that "involves a data aggregating and meaning-making process described as doing analysis and denoting concepts to stand for data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The researcher then created clusters of themes to identify broader units of information by grouping statements of significance (Creswell & Poth, 2018) under the study objectives of provision of school needs, payment of supplementary fees, parental follow up of children and parents participation in school meetings. Utilizing these statements and emerging themes, the researcher generated a textural and structural description of the findings of the participants, from which a composite description was written (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.10 Measurement of Variables

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), measurement of variables gave the researcher information regarding the extent of individual differences on a given variable. The variables were measured by operationally defining concepts. For instance, the questionnaire was designed to obtain perceptions and views about parents' involvement (IV) using indicators such as payment of supplementary fees, provision of school needs, attending meetings, and parental follow-up; and student retention (DV) in USE schools in Amuru District. These were then channeled into scaled and measurable elements for the development of an index of the concept using the five-point Likert scale, namely: (5) for strongly agree, (4) for agree, (3) for neutral, (2) for disagree, and (1) for strongly disagree to measure both the independent and dependent variables. The characteristics of the respondents were measured at both nominal and ordinal scales (Kothari, 2004). The nominal scale was used to measure sex (gender) and the position held by respondents, while the ordinal scale was used to measure age group and years of service/study in the schools.

3.11 Role of Researcher

Mill and Gay (2019) advised that the primary role of the researcher during the interview was to create an atmosphere that made participants feel safe and comfortable to share their experiences. The researcher served as a teacher in one of the USE schools in Amuru District. Other roles of the researcher described by Creswell and Poth (2018) included creating the open-ended interview questions, collecting the interview data from participants, observing the participants during the interview, and writing field notes

3.12 Ethical Consideration

Conducting ethical research was imperative throughout the dissertation process so that it was worthy of dissemination. Graduate students were tasked with being good stewards when researching as they collected, analyzed, annotated, curated, preserved, and disseminated their data (Nelson et al., 2018). Research studies needed to be "consistent with generally accepted ethical principles" (Glatthorn, Joyner, & Rouse, 2013, p. 8). Additionally, research studies should be grounded in honesty to ensure there was no deception throughout the research process,

and they should not result in any physical or emotional pain for participants while reflecting equity by not supporting any type of discrimination (Glatthorn et al., 2013).

Based on these guiding principles, the researcher strictly adhered to all procedures. After establishing the suitability of the instruments, the researcher developed a program of activities and obtained a letter of introduction from Gulu University Directorate of Research and Graduate Training (DRGT) explaining the purpose of the study and soliciting cooperation from the selected respondents. Permissions were sought from the head of participating schools and participants were given adequate time to review and consent to participate in the study, as well as the opportunity to freely disengage in the study at any stage if they felt uncomfortable. Participants were assured of anonymity, and the information was kept confidential. The information and data collected were only used for the purpose of the study.

3.13 Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

Assumptions of the study

Assumptions are factors that are taken for granted in respect to the study such as nature of respondents, data, time, resources etc.

The assumptions that guided this study included;

Availability of documents for collection of secondary data from the schools; Willingness of respondents to respond to the research questions without fear or dishonesty; Availability of funds to finance the whole process of conducting the research; and Sufficient time was available for the respondents to intensively understand the research questions and sincerely answer them and also for the researcher to collect and analyse the data.

Limitations of the study

Limitations related to the validity and reliability of the study. They were characteristics of the research design or methodology that were out of the researcher's control but influenced the findings. In the course of the study, the researcher encountered some of these limitations;

For both qualitative and quantitative data, there was mistrust by some respondents who hesitated to answer the questions due to fear of being victimized or pointed out despite the promise that data collected was purely for research purposes and would be treated with respect and utmost

confidentiality,. This was addressed by obtaining an introductory letter from the institution that was be presented to the respondents and their consent was sought before start of the interview.

Some respondents were not be willing to show cooperation to be interviewed. The researcher built a rapport with the respondents before issuing out questionnaires or starting up the interview.

Much as the researcher faced challenges of getting a convenient time from the respondents to answer the questionnaires, some respondents were allowed to remain with the questionnaire form and filled in at their free and convenient time especially for teachers, which led to delay in data collections, but the researcher addressed this delay by working overtime to counter for lost time.

The sample of participants might not be comprehensive enough to obtain data saturation; the research tool might also provided narrow results to obtain in-depth information about the research problem; and the data analysis methodology provided correlation, but not causation between the variables.

Delimitations of the study

These were boundaries of the research study based on the Researcher's decision of what to include and what to exclude from the study in order to make the study manageable and relevant.

Despite of the many factors to consider under parental involvement that affected student retention, this study only focused on provision of school needs, payment of supplementary fees, parental follow up and attendance to meetings since these were the factors that directly impacted students' stay in schools.

The study was conducted in Amuru District only due to the low student retention rate in USE schools in the District.

The study used mixed-methods that included structured interviews and closed-ended questionnaires; data were collected within a timeframe of 3months using a sample of 25 interviewees and 538 survey participants to be recruited using purposive, simple random sampling and cluster sampling techniques.

Chapter Four

Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of data collected from 505 respondents, focusing on several key objectives related to the educational landscape in Amuru District. Specifically, the chapter aimed to determine the relationship between parents' provision of school needs and students' retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools.

Additionally, it explored the connection between parents' payment of supplementary fees and students' retention rates, assessed the effect of parents' follow-up of their children in schools, and established the relationship between parents' participation in school meetings and students' retention rates. Through this comprehensive analysis, the chapter sought to provide insights into the factors influencing student retention in USE schools, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the educational challenges and opportunities within the district.

4.1 Response rate

This study had sample size of 538 respondents comprising of 108 teachers, 415 students & student leaders, 05 BoG Representatives, 05 PTA Representatives and 05 Headteachers/Deputy Headteachers. The overall response rate is shown below;

Category	Intended	Attained	Percentage response
Headteachers/Deputy Headteachers	05	05	100%
BoG Representatives	05	03	60%
PTA Representatives	05	04	80%
Students & Student Leaders	415	404	97.3%
Teachers	108	101	93.5%
Total	538	520	96.7%

Primary data 2024

Head teachers/deputies were well represented with 100% response rate, followed by student & Student leaders with 97.3%, teachers with 93.5%, PTA representatives with 80%, and BoG representatives with 60%. Overall, the study achieved a response rate of over 96.7% which is representative enough of the population from which it was selected.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section provided a brief overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their roles as teachers and students, as well as relevant variables such as age, gender, and experience. Understanding the demographic context was crucial for interpreting the data effectively, as it revealed patterns and trends that influenced the study findings. By examining these characteristics, we could better appreciate the diverse perspectives and experiences of the respondents, which were essential for a holistic understanding of the factors affecting student retention in USE schools in Amuru District. The subsequent sections delved into the detailed analysis of the collected data, providing statistical insights and interpretations to address the research objectives outlined above.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Teachers and Students

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Position Held (Teachers)		
Head of Department	24	23.8%
Class Teacher	23	22.7%
Teacher	54	53.5%
Total	101	100.0%
Sex (Teachers)		
Male	61	60.4%
Female	40	39.6%
Total	101	100.0%
Age Group (Teachers)		
20-30 years	22	21.8%
31-40 years	49	48.5%
41-50 years	25	24.7%
More than 50 years	5	5.0%
Total	101	100.0%
Years in Service (Teachers)		
1-5 years	23	22.8%
6-10 years	44	43.6%
11-15 years	23	22.7%
More than 15 years	11	10.9%
Total	101	100.0%
Gender (Students)		
Male	164	40.6%
Female	240	59.4%
Total	404	100.0%
Age (Students)		
Below 15 years	5	1.2%
16-20 years	379	93.8%
20 years and more	20	5.0%
Total	404	100.0%
Years Studied in School		
Less than a year	96	23.8%
1-3 years	240	59.4%
More than 3 years	67	16.6%
22 (irregular entry)	1	0.2%
Total	404	100.0%

Primary data 2024

In the analysis of the demographic characteristics of teachers and students, the data revealed a diverse representation within the educational workforce and student body in the study of parental involvement and student retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District, Northern Uganda. Among the 101 teachers surveyed, the majority held the position of Teacher (53.5%), followed closely by Heads of Department (23.8%) and Class Teachers (22.7%). This distribution indicated a strong presence of experienced educators actively engaged in direct instruction and leadership roles within the schools.

The gender composition of teachers showed a significant male majority, with 60.4% identifying as male compared to 39.6% female. The age distribution of the teachers indicated that nearly half (48.5%) were in the 31-40 years age group, suggesting a predominantly mid-career demographic. Additionally, the years of service among teachers varied, with the largest group (43.6%) having between 6 to 10 years of experience, highlighting a relatively stable teaching workforce within the schools. The time worked in the school served as a basis for perceptions of student retention and need for improvement and coercing of parents to participate in the academic affairs of their children.

The student demographic comprised a total of 404 respondents, with a notable female majority at 59.4%, compared to 40.6% male; this could be attributed to the affirmative action that put more emphasis on girl-child education. The age distribution of students revealed that 93.8% were between 16 and 20 years old, reflecting the typical age range for secondary education students. Moreover, the years studied in school indicated that a significant proportion (59.4%) had been enrolled for 1 to 3 years, while 23.8% had been in school for less than a year. This suggested that a large number of students were in senior two to senior four.

Overall, the demographic data presented a snapshot of the educational environment in Amuru District, illustrating a committed and experienced teaching staff alongside a diverse student population primarily in the secondary education age range. This information was crucial for understanding the dynamics of parental involvement and its potential impact on student retention within these schools.

4.2 Amuru District USE Enrollment

Proportion of 2020 S1 intake and number of students who sat for S4 after four years in 2024. The findings on student retention rate are shown below.

Table 3: Amuru District USE Enrollment between the period 2020 and 2024

Year	2020	2022	2023	2024
S. 1	691	722	764	810
S. 2	590	639	652	681
S. 3	501	564	536	549
S. 4	416	438	412	430
Total	2,198	2,363	2,364	2,470

Secondary Data (Amuru District Education Office, 2024)

As indicated in Table 3 above, out of the 691 S1 intake for 2020 in the USE schools in Amuru District, only 430 students registered to sit for S4 after 4 years in 2024 thus giving a retention rate of 62.2%. The results showed that slightly more than half of the enrolled students completed their ordinary cycle of education. The 37.8% of the Students who left school could be attributed to lack of parents' involvement in providing required school needs in terms of scholastic materials, personal effects and financial support. Also most parents do not participate in the school meeting hence there was information gap on care and support for their children; in addition to limited follow up once children were in schools; this therefore has affected student's retention negatively.

4.3 Parents' Involvement in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District

The study examined the level of parents' involvement in Universal secondary education schools in Amuru District, highlighting their contributions in various aspects such as provision of school needs, payment of supplementary fees, participation in school meetings, and follow-up on their children's education.

Table 4: Parents' Involvement

Parents' Involvement	SD	D	SD+D	N	A	SA	A+SA
Parents provision of school needs							
1. Parents always provide their children with scholastic materials when asked for	0.8%	2.2%	3.0%	0.3%	45.4%	51.3%	97.0%
2. parents frequently provide all instructional materials required for their children	2.2%	12.8%	15.0%	0.5%	43.4%	41.1%	85.0%
3. Parents always provide meals for their children	1.2%	5.0%	6.2%	0.0%	43.7%	50.1%	93.8%
4. Parents are always coerced to provide school needs for their children	31.2%	7.7%	38.9%	0.7%	10.5%	49.9%	60.4%
5. Parents always provide adequate school needs for their children	4.0%	26.1%	30.1%	0.2%	31.3%	38.4%	69.9%
Average	3.74%	19.22%	22.94%	0.28%	32.50%	37.84%	77.06%
Parents' payment of supplementary fees.							
6. Parents always pay fixed top up fees per term in time	7.7%	36.0%	43.7%	0.8%	16.0%	39.4%	56.3%
7. Special charges per term are always paid by parents as required	17.8%	63.8%	81.6%	0.5%	12.4%	5.5%	18.4%
8. Parents pay one-off annual fees for their Children as required	17.0%	34.1%	51.1%	0.9%	36.3%	11.7%	48.9%
9. Parents pay school fees on time	4.6%	19.0%	23.6%	0.6%	46.3%	29.5%	76.4%
10. Parents are finding it difficult to pay supplementary fees for their children	0.8%	4.2%	5.0%	1.2%	56.4%	37.4%	95.0%
Average	9.58%	31.42%	41.02%	0.67%	34.28%	24.70%	58.98%
Primary data 2024							

The study on parental involvement and student retention in Universal Secondary Education schools in Amuru District revealed significant levels of parental support in providing school needs as shown in 77.06% of the parents. A majority of parents were actively involved in providing scholastic materials (97.0%) and meals (93.5%) for their children. However, despite this support, 60.4% of parents were coerced to provide school necessities, and only 69.9% managed to consistently meet their children's school needs. This suggested that while parents

were generally responsive to their children's educational requirements, a notable proportion struggled or required external pressure to fulfill these obligations.

Regarding the payment of supplementary fees, the study found out that 58.98% of parents paid these fees on time or as required, although 41.02% experienced challenges in making timely payments. The majority of parents (95%) faced difficulty in paying supplementary fees, highlighting financial constraints in the community. Although a smaller proportion of parents (56.2%) managed to pay top-up fees punctually, there were concerns about affordability, with 81.6% struggling to meet special charges per term.

These findings showed the realities faced by families in Amuru District. It was clear that while parental involvement in education was evident in many ways, economic hardships continued to present significant barriers. As a researcher, I believe that addressing these financial challenges through targeted interventions could greatly improve student retention and overall educational outcomes in such communities. It is crucial that policy measures consider these constraints to foster a more supportive environment for both parents and students.

Table 5: Participation in school meetings and Parents' follow-up of children

Parents' Involvement	SD	D	SD+D	N	A	SA	A+SA
Participation in school meetings							
1. The school often invites Parents to attend school meetings	0.8%	1.4%	2.2%	0.0%	46.3%	51.5%	97.8%
2. Parents are involved in school meetings more than three times a year	47.5%	27.1%	74.6%	0.2%	5.1%	20.0%	25.1%
3. Parent's turn up for school meeting invitations is very high	3.0%	37.1%	40.1%	9.2 %	46.1%	4.6%	50.7%
4. Parents attend PTA annual general meetings whenever called upon	23.4%	61.0%	84.4%	0.3%	12.2%	3.2%	15.4%
5. Parents volunteer to take up leadership positions when asked during the PTA meetings	9.7%	42.0%	51.7%	0.0%	20.0%	28.3%	48.3%
Average	16.88%	33.72%	50.60%	1.94%	25.94%	21.52%	47.46%
Parents' follow-up of children							
1. Parents make impromptu visits to talk to teachers about their children education progress	58.2%	14.1%	72.3%	0.4%	10.1%	17.2%	27.7%
2. School always invites parents for class meetings/class days	6.1%	35.0%	41.1%	0.7%	29.5%	29.1%	58.6%
3. School always invites parents for class meetings/class days	13.5%	53.5%	67%	0.0%	23.0%	10.1%	33.1%
4. Parents always come for visitation days	1.8%	7.7%	9.5%	0.2%	76.4%	14.1%	90.5%
5. Parents always come to attend to their children's disciplinary issues whenever called upon	26.7%	48.5%	75.2%	0.0%	15.8%	8.9%	24.7%
Average	21.26%	31.76%	53.02%	0.26%	30.96%	15.88%	46.92%

Primary data 2024

The analysis of parents' involvement in school meetings and their follow-up of children revealed significant trends in engagement levels within the educational community. In terms of participation in school meetings, a remarkable 97.8% of respondents agreed that schools often invite parents to attend meetings. However, despite this encouragement, a substantial 74.6% reported that parents were involved in these meetings less than three times a year, indicating a disconnect between invitations and actual participation. While 50.7% noted a high turnout for school meeting invitations, 40.1% disagreed, highlighting a mixed response regarding parental attendance.

Regarding specific events, a striking 84.4% of parents attended PTA annual general meetings whenever called upon, suggesting that such events were prioritized by parents. Conversely, participation in leadership roles during PTA meetings was more evenly split, with 51.7% of parents willing to take on leadership positions when asked, while 48.3% did not. The average scores in this section indicated a moderate level of involvement, with 50.60% of respondents expressing agreement regarding participation in school meetings.

Parents' follow-up of children showed a more positive engagement trend. Although only 27.7% reported making impromptu visits to discuss their children's educational progress with teachers, 90.5% of parents consistently attended visitation days, underscoring a strong commitment to their children's academic experiences. However, only 41.1% agreed that the school always invited parents for class meetings, indicating room for improvement in communication efforts by the schools.

Overall, the average participation rates for parents' involvement in school meetings and follow-up activities were 47.62% and 46.92%, respectively. This analysis illustrated a general trend of moderate parental interest in their children's education, particularly during critical events, while also pointing out the challenges in ensuring regular attendance at school meetings. These insights were essential for developing strategies to enhance parental involvement and ultimately improve student retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District.

These findings highlighted the importance of developing targeted strategies to encourage more regular and meaningful parental participation. Such efforts could significantly enhance student retention and overall educational outcomes in Universal Secondary Schools across Amuru District.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics on Parents' Involvement

Descriptive Statistics on Parents' Involvement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Parents always provide their children with scholastic materials when asked for	505	1	5	2245	4.45	.688
2. parents frequently provide all instructional materials required for their children	505	1	5	2067	4.09	1.058
3. Parents always provide meals for their children	505	1	5	2201	4.37	.821
4. Parents are always coerced to provide school needs for their children	505	1	5	1396	2.76	1.222
5. Parents always provide adequate school needs for their children	505	1	5	1890	3.74	1.313
6. Parents always pay fixed top up fees per term in time	505	1	5	1738	3.44	1.491
7. Special charges per term are always paid by parents as required	505	1	5	1134	2.25	1.065
8. Parents pay one-off annual fees for their Children as required	505	1	5	1477	2.92	1.364
9. Parents pay school fees on time	505	1	5	1908	3.78	1.191
10. Parents are finding it difficult to pay supplementary fees for their children	505	1	5	2155	4.27	.736
11. The school often invites Parents to Attend school meetings	505	1	5	2254	4.46	.654
12. Parents are involved in school meetings more than three times a year	505	1	5	1876	3.71	1.208
13. Parent's turn up for school meeting invitations is very high	505	1	5	2019	4.00	1.096
14. Parents attend PTA annual general meetings whenever called upon	505	1	5	1066	2.11	1.004
15. Parents volunteer to take up leadership positions when asked during the PTA meetings	505	1	5	1592	3.15	1.457
16. Parents make impromptu visits to talk to teachers about their children education progress	505	1	5	1758	2.25	1.228
17. School always invites parents for class meetings/class days	505	1	44	1760	3.49	2.271
18. School always invites parents for class meetings/class days	505	1	5	1986	3.93	.779
19. Parents always come for visitation days	505	1	5	1327	4.36	1.254
20. Parents always come to attend to their children's disciplinary issues whenever called upon	505	1	5	1170	2.32	1.267
Average	505	1	6.95	1750.95	3.47	1.158

Primary data 2024

The descriptive statistics on parental involvement in Universal Secondary Education schools in Amuru District revealed a high level of engagement in providing scholastic materials and meals for their children. The mean score for parents providing scholastic materials was 4.45 (SD = 0.688), while parents frequently provided instructional materials with a mean of 4.09 (SD = 1.058). Similarly, parents consistently provided meals for their children, with a mean score of 4.37 (SD = 0.821). However, there was a noticeable decrease in parental provision of adequate school needs, with a mean of 3.74 (SD = 1.313), with a notable number being coerced to provide their children's needs Mean of 2.26 (SD = 1.222). This suggested that while parents were generally supportive, there were some limitations in fully meeting their children's educational requirements, although a good number needed to be coerced. It also implied that the majority of the students were availed with scholastic materials on time. The provision of scholastic materials complimented the available materials that the school might be having hence motivating the student to read hard by themselves even when the teachers were not around. The students were also provided with meals which helped them to concentrate in their studies, resulting into high retention and overall good academic performance. It was unfortunate though that some parents wanted to be coerced first before they could provide for their own children's educational needs.

In terms of financial contributions, parents struggled more with paying supplementary and special charges. The mean score for paying fixed top-up fees on time was 3.44 (SD = 1.491), while special charges per term had a lower mean of 2.25 (SD = 1.065). Parents also found it difficult to pay one-off annual fees, with a mean of 2.92 (SD = 1.364). However, they were more consistent in paying regular school fees on time, with a mean of 3.78 (SD = 1.191), and expressed significant difficulty in paying supplementary fees, as indicated by a high mean of 4.27 (SD = 0.736).with a notable number being coerced to pay. This implied late payment of top-up fees coupled with inadequate payment of special charges. When such payments were not made on time and in required amount, students were more likely to be sent home from time to time, thus, reducing their concentration in class and lowering their self-esteem. This had a negative bearing on students' retention rate in USE schools and the reverse was true. Furthermore, this late payment or non-payment affected the teaching process since the school could not adequately facilitate the teaching of the children through purchasing instructional materials and improving teachers' welfare. This implied that parental involvement in paying children's supplementary fees was still wanting and this might have a negative bearing on

student retention rate. These difficulties perhaps were attributed to the overwhelming poverty among the parents in the District and the entire population at large. So because of poverty, parents were unable to provide adequate meals, school dues were paid late or even not paid at all.

Regarding parental participation in school meetings, there was strong involvement overall. The mean score for parents being invited to attend school meetings was 4.46 (SD = 0.654), and parents attendance of school meetings more than three times a year has a mean of 3.71 (SD = 1.208) and attendance at PTA annual general meetings was notably lower, with a mean of 2.11 (SD = 1.004). Parents were also hesitant to take up leadership positions during PTA meetings, as reflected in a mean score of 3.15 (SD = 1.457). The fact that school authorities invited parents for meetings implied that the school authorities valued the involvement of the parents as stakeholders and so they were needed to actively involve themselves in meetings to improve retention of their children. In addition, the findings suggested that schools invested a lot in having the parents participate in the school affairs and there was much emphasis put on parent attendance of school meetings. However, findings showed that parents' participation in school meetings even when invited by the school authorities was still wanting, hence, more effort needed to be made to encourage parents attend in bigger numbers. Meeting parents over the academic affairs of their children was an encouragement for hard work and this could make students stay in school till the required time.

Parental follow-up on their children's academic progress showed moderate engagement. The mean score for making impromptu visits to talk to teachers was 2.25 (SD = 1.228), while school invitations for class meetings had a mean of 3.93 (SD = 0.779). However, visitation days were well attended, with a mean score of 4.36 (SD = 1.254), and parents attending to their children's disciplinary issues had a mean of 2.32 (SD = 1.267). These findings indicated that while there was considerable parental involvement, there were areas where participation could be improved, particularly in PTA meetings and follow-ups on student discipline. It was important that parents make visits to schools to talk to the teachers about their children's academic progress since this would send a signal to the child that he/she was being closely monitored, hence, helping children to concentrate in their studies and behave well which in turn would make them stay in school.

4.4 Student Retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District

Table 7: Student Retention

Student Retention	SD	D	SD+D	N	A	SA	A+S\
1. Our school admits relatively high number of students in senior one every year.	1.2%	2.3%	3.5%	0.0%	43.0%	53.5%	96.5%
2. All students consistently attend classes every school day without missing.	27.5%	69.2%	97.2%	0.3%	2.8%	0.0%	2.8%
3. Students always participate in all scheduled school activities throughout the academic term.	29.6%	68.1%	97.7%	0.1%	1.4%	0.8%	2.2%
4. Class teachers call attendance registers every day.	22.8%	25.3%	48.1%	0.0%	31.5%	21.4%	52.9%
5. Students always ask for permission to be absent from school.	29.1%	68.7%	97.8%	0.0%	0.6%	1.6%	2.2%
6. All students enrolled in a class complete the year and get promoted to the next class.	11.2%	31.2%	42.4%	0.0%	35.9%	21.7%	57.6%
7. All students admitted in senior one in this school complete Senior Four.	10.4%	33.2%	43.6%	0.1%	29.0%	27.3%	56.4%
Average	14.67%	42.57%	55.76%	0.07%	14.89%	18.04%	38.66%

Primary data 2024

The findings on student retention in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District highlighted significant impact of parental involvement on students' continued presence in school. A considerable 96.5% of respondents agreed that their schools admit relatively high number of students in senior one, meaning that a high number of students usually enroll for their first year of secondary education in the USE Schools. 97.2% of the respondents disagreed with the notion that all students consistently attend classes every school day without missing and this showed that not all the students who enroll in school consistently attend classes every school day, hence there was a high level of absenteeism among the learners. Moreover, 97.8% of those students who miss school, do so without asking for permission. 97.7% of respondents also disagreed that Students always participate in all scheduled school activities throughout the academic term. This further showed that the students were not attending school every school day.

It was also seen that only a moderate percentage of class teachers called attendance registers everyday as observed in 52.9% of respondents agreeing. This most likely affected early detection of students who did not consistently attend classes so that early follow up could be done to find out why they are missing school.

57.6% of the respondents agreed that all the students who enroll in a particular class in a year completed the year and got promoted to the next class, with 56.4% agreeing that all the students who enroll in senior one completed their study cycle i.e. senior four from the same school. This meant that nearly half of the students who enroll in each class as well as in the first year never remained in school. It, therefore, showed that the level of retention in the USE schools dropped by nearly 44%.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics on Student Retention

Descriptive Statistics on Student Retention	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Our school admits relatively high number of students in senior one every year.	505	1	5	4.45	.723
2. All students consistently attend classes every school day without missing.	505	1	5	1.79	.595
3. Students always participate in all scheduled school activities throughout the academic term.	505	1	5	1.76	.598
4. Class teachers call attendance registers every day.	505	1	5	3.14	1.521
5. Students always ask for permission to be absent from school.	505	1	5	1.80	.703
6. All students enrolled in a class complete the year and get promoted to the next class.	505	1	5	3.23	1.381
7. All students admitted in senior one in this school complete Senior Four.	505	1	5	3.31	1.424
Average	505	1	5	2.78	0.992

Primary data 2024

The analysis of student retention in Universal Secondary Education schools in Amuru District revealed strong associations between parental involvement and student retention rates. The mean score for student enrollment in senior one every year was high ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.723$), indicating strong agreement with the fact that there was always high enrollment in senior every year in the USE schools.

However, the notion that all students consistently attended classes every school day without missing had a low mean ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.595$), which was similar to students' participation in all scheduled school activities throughout the academic term ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 0.598$) and Students asking for permission to be absent from school ($M = 1.80$, $SD = 0.703$). These low mean values indicated that there was strong disagreement with the statements above. It, therefore, meant that there was a high rate of absenteeism of student which eventually affected retention of students negatively. Class teachers calling attendance registers every day had a moderate mean ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.521$) indicating a balanced perception. This meant when class teachers regularly call attendance registers, cases of absenteeism could be detected early, giving room for early follow up which could improve retention of students.

Similarly, all students enrolled in a class complete the year and get promoted to the next class also had a moderate score ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.381$); as well as all students admitted in senior one in this school complete Senior Four ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.421$). These moderate mean values indicated a balanced perspective among respondents i.e. slightly more than half of the students who enroll were retained each year and were able to complete their study cycle (senior four) from the school.

Looked at carefully, the findings called attention to the critical role of attendance and consistent follow-up in enhancing student retention. While high enrollment figures were encouraging, the evident absenteeism showed evident challenge that schools and parents must collaboratively address. Overall, the moderate retention rates highlighted both progress and opportunities for targeted interventions to ensure more students complete their education cycle in Amuru's USE schools.

4.5 Relationship between parents’ provision of school needs and students’ retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District

The study examined the relationship between parents' provision of school needs and the student retention rate in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District, revealing a significant positive correlation between the two variables.

Table 9: Research questions 1: What is the relationship between Parents’ provision of school needs and Students’ Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?

Correlations

Relationship between parents’ provision of school needs
and students’ retention rate

Parents’ provision of school needs	Pearson Correlation	1	.305**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	504	504
Student Retention	Pearson Correlation	.305**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	504	505

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

Primary data 2024

The correlation analysis showed a moderate and statistically significant relationship between parents' provision of school needs and students' retention rate in Universal Secondary Education schools. The Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.305 ($r = 0.305^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that a moderate positive association existed between these two variables according to Cohen (1988). The relationship was statistically significant because the calculated p- value was less than 0.01 criterions thus a p-value less than 0.01 led us to conclude that there was evidence against the null hypothesis. The implication of the findings was that parents’ provision of school needs had something to do with students’ retention rate. From the findings it should be noted that although very important, parents’ provision of school needs had a moderate significant positive relationship with students’ retention rate. It meant that parents’ provision of school needs was essential in determining students’ retention rate. This meant that as parents improve their support

by providing necessary school needs, students were more likely to remain enrolled and attend school regularly. The analysis was based on a sample of 504 participants, further supporting the robustness of these findings and highlighting the critical role that parental contributions play in student retention rates.

4.5.1 Thematic Analysis of Parental Provision of School Needs and Student Retention

4.5.1.1 Introduction

In conducting qualitative interviews with key stakeholders in secondary education in Amuru District, Northern Uganda, I aimed to understand the relationship between parents' provision of school needs and students' retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools. The data were collected from five sets of key respondents: A, Head Teachers, B, Board of Governors (BOG) representatives, C, Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) representatives, D, student leaders, and E, class teachers. The responses revealed several recurring themes, particularly regarding the significance of parental support in providing essential school needs and its influence on students' motivation, engagement, and retention.

The diversity of perspectives from these key stakeholders provided rich insights into the educational dynamics at play in the district. Each participant's unique role offered a deep understanding of how parental involvement can shape educational outcomes. Through their narratives, it became evident that the provision of school needs by parents is not merely about physical supplies but encompasses emotional and psychological support as well. This analysis aimed to unpack these complex interrelations and highlight the implications for educational policy and practice.

4.5.1.2 Material Support

The respondent A1 articulated a strong connection between the provision of school needs and students' retention rates. She stated, *"When parents provide uniforms, textbooks, and other essential materials, it not only reduces dropout rates but also enhances students' confidence and sense of belonging in the school."* An interview with respondent C1, revealed that: *"Children are not provided with necessary or required learning materials which affects their learning and interest to continue with their studies"* B1 stated in an interview that: *"Parents are involved in*

their children`s education by providing school needs/ requirements like reams of photocopying paper, pens, bags, uniforms, mathematical sets and pocket money and this keeps them going and continuing with their studies.” This observation underscored the critical role that material support played in fostering an environment conducive to learning. Students who arrived at school equipped with necessary resources were likely to feel more prepared and engaged, facilitating a smoother educational experience.

Moreover, the Key informants’ experiences aligned with existing literature, which highlighted that students who were adequately equipped with necessary resources were more likely to remain engaged and committed to their education. The idea that material provision enhanced self-esteem among students illustrated how essential school supplies transcended mere utility and became a crucial component of a student's overall educational experience. When students felt supported materially, they were not only more likely to stay in school but also performed better academically, reinforcing the notion that parental contributions directly impacted student retention.

4.5.1.3 Student Motivation

From the perspective of Respondent B1, the influence of parental support extended far beyond mere material provision to significantly impact students' motivation and their willingness to continue their education. Respondent B1 articulated this point by stating, *“When parents actively participate in providing for their children’s educational needs, it sends a powerful message about the value of education. Students feel motivated to succeed when they know their parents are interested in their schooling.”* This observation highlighted how parental involvement served as a vital determinant of student success and retention. It created an environment where education was not only valued but prioritized, reinforcing the idea that students thrived when they perceived that their families had invested in their academic journeys. Thus, it became evident that the home environment, characterized by active parental participation, played a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward learning and their overall academic persistence.

Respondent C1, echoed this sentiment by emphasizing the critical importance of parental involvement in shaping students' resilience. He stated, *“Students are more likely to persevere through challenges when they feel supported by their families.”* This perspective resonated

deeply with the collective experiences of the other stakeholders, pointing to the profound impact that parental involvement and the provision of resources had on students' psychological and emotional well-being. When parents engaged actively in their children's education, they fostered a supportive atmosphere that promoted accountability and responsibility. This nurturing environment empowered children to recognize the intrinsic value of their education and to persist in overcoming obstacles. Furthermore, the emotional support that came from knowing their families cared deeply about their educational success enhanced students' motivation and commitment to their studies, which was essential for improving retention rates.

The insights from Respondent D1, further elucidated the interconnectedness of parental support and peer motivation. He noted that when parents were involved in their children's education, it not only encouraged individual students but also inspired a culture of motivation among peers. He remarked, *“When students see their friends' parents engaging with school activities, it creates a ripple effect that encourages them to take their studies seriously.”* This observation underscored the idea that the influence of parental engagement extended beyond the home, fostering a collective sense of purpose among students. As students witnessed their peers benefiting from active parental involvement, it created an environment where academic achievement became a shared goal. This dynamic not only enhanced individual motivation but also cultivated a supportive community where students were inspired to hold each other accountable for their educational progress.

Finally, the perspective of Respondent E1, further supported the notion that parental involvement significantly impacted student motivation and engagement in the classroom. He observed, *“Students whose parents are actively engaged tend to participate more in class, show better attendance, and demonstrate a stronger commitment to their studies.”* This correlation suggested that parental involvement played a direct role in enhancing students' educational experiences. Engaged parents often communicated the importance of education to their children, leading to increased participation, improved academic performance and eventually student retention. The overall insights gleaned from these respondents illustrated that parental involvement was not merely a peripheral factor in educational success; it was a critical component that fostered a motivated student body. When students felt supported at home, they persisted in their academic

journeys, highlighting the essential role that parental support played in ensuring student retention and success within the educational system.

4.5.1.4 Peer Influence and Accountability

Respondent D2, provided a firsthand account of how the availability of school materials influences classmates' decisions to remain in school. He expressed this sentiment poignantly, stating, *“When I see my friends who struggle to get basic materials drop out, it makes me appreciate what my parents provide for me. It also pushes me to do better because I don’t want to disappoint them.”* This reflection illustrated the direct link between students’ awareness of their peers’ situations and their motivation to remain in school. The glaring realities faced by some of his classmates served as a sad reminder of the privileges others enjoy, fostering a sense of gratitude that significantly impacted academic persistence. Such observations highlighted the complex social dynamics at play within the school environment, where the actions and circumstances of peers can greatly influence individual student choices and aspirations.

Furthermore, Respondent D1’s insights reinforced the idea that access to school materials not only supported individual learning but also fostered a culture of accountability and aspiration among students. The awareness of classmates facing difficulties often cultivated a collective sense of responsibility among students. As Respondent D1 noted, the struggles of others served as a motivational catalyst for those who have adequate resources. This dynamic illustrated that empathy for peers' challenges could inspire students to strive for success and remained committed to their educational goals. The sense of accountability generated through these peer interactions encouraged students to value their own educational opportunities and work diligently to achieve their aspirations.

This peer-driven accountability not only enhanced individual motivation but also created a supportive community within the school environment. Respondent D4 observed that when students recognized the importance of supporting each other, it promoted an atmosphere where encouragement and solidarity became central themes. He remarked, *“When we see our friends doing well, it inspires us to do the same. We want to help each other succeed.”* This collective commitment to education could lead to improved retention rates, as students actively participated in creating a nurturing and motivating environment for one another. By nurturing a culture where

students felt responsible for not only their own success but also that of their peers, schools could enhance overall academic engagement and persistence.

Ultimately, the interplay of individual aspirations and collective experiences formed a robust framework for student motivation within the educational landscape. The insights from Respondent D1 demonstrated that peer influence and accountability played a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward education. When students actively engaged with one another and recognize the value of their educational experiences, they were more likely to stay engaged and committed to their studies. This supportive dynamic reinforced the idea that the school environment significantly impacted retention rates by encouraging students to hold themselves and their peers accountable for their academic journeys, ultimately contributing to a stronger, more resilient student body.

4.5.1.5 Classroom Dynamics

Respondent E3, highlighted the broader implications of parental provision on classroom dynamics and overall academic performance. She remarked, *“Students who come to school prepared and equipped with what they need tend to participate more actively in class and perform better academically. It is disheartening to see some students fall behind simply because they lack basic supplies.”* This observation highlighted the necessity of equitable access to educational resources, suggesting that disparities in parental provision led to unequal academic outcomes and ultimately affected student retention. When students arrived at school equipped with necessary materials, they were better positioned to engage in the learning process, which fostered a more dynamic and interactive classroom environment.

Respondent E3's experience reflected the broader educational challenges faced by students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds, stressing the need for targeted interventions to support those in need. She emphasized that when some students lack essential supplies, it not only hampered their academic performance but also impacted their confidence and willingness to participate in class discussions. This scenario could create a divide among students, where those who were better equipped dominated classroom interactions, while their less-prepared peers felt marginalized. As a result, addressing these disparities in parental provision was crucial for promoting an inclusive classroom dynamics that encouraged participation from all students.

Furthermore, ensuring that all students had access to necessary school supplies could help level the playing field, promoting better classroom dynamics and enhancing overall retention. Respondent E3 pointed out that *“When students have what they need, they normally engage with the material and with each other, creating a more cohesive learning environment.”* This cohesion was vital for building a supportive classroom culture where students felt valued and motivated to contribute. It highlighted the importance of proactive measures by educational stakeholders to address resource gaps, as this can significantly enhance students’ learning experiences and outcomes.

As such, educational stakeholders must advocate for policies that encouraged parental involvement and addressed gaps in resource provision, ultimately developing an environment where all students thrived academically and socially. Respondent E3 concluded by stating that *“We need to work together to ensure that no child feels left out because of what they do or do not have.”* This commitment to equity in educational resources was essential for creating a conducive learning environment that not only supported academic success but also promoted the social and emotional development of all students. By prioritizing these efforts, schools could create more equitable opportunities for all learners, enhancing both retention and overall academic achievement.

4.6 Relationship between parents’ payment of supplementary fees and students’ retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District

The study investigated the relationship between parents’ payment of supplementary fees and students’ retention rate in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District, highlighting a weak yet significant positive correlation between the two variables.

Table 10: Research question 2: To what extent does Parents’ payment of supplementary fees influence Students’ Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?

Correlations

Relationship between parents’ payment of supplementary fees and students’ retention rate in USE schools		Parents’ payment of supplementary fees	Student Retention
Parents’ payment of supplementary fees	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	505	
Student Retention	Pearson Correlation	.143**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	505	505

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

Primary data 2024

The correlation analysis revealed a weak but statistically significant relationship between parents’ payment of supplementary fees and students’ retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools. The Pearson correlation coefficient was weak at ($r = 0.143^{**}$, $p < 0.01$) between the two variables according to Cohen (1988)., indicating that as parents fulfill their supplementary fee obligations, there was a slight increase in student retention rates. This weak positive correlation (Cohen, 1988) suggested that while the payment of supplementary fees by parents had a positive effect on retention, but it might not be a primary driver of students remaining in school. With a sample size of 505 participants, the significance of this relationship highlighted the importance of financial support; however, it also suggested that other factors which might have not been considered in this study significantly influenced student retention alongside parents' payment of supplementary fees.

4.6.1 Thematic Analysis of Parental Payment of Supplementary Fees and Student Retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Amuru District

4.6.1.1 Introduction

In the exploration of how parents' payment of supplementary fees influenced students' retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District, I conducted interviews with five sets of key respondents: A, Head Teachers, B, Board of Governors (BOG) representatives, C, Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) representatives, D, student leaders, and

E, class teachers. The collected data revealed several themes regarding the significance of timely payment of supplementary fees, emphasizing their effects on financial stability within schools and students' educational experiences.

The diverse perspectives gathered from these respondents provided a comprehensive understanding of the implications of supplementary fee payments on student retention. Each participant's role within the educational ecosystem offered unique insights into how financial contributions from parents significantly affected the educational landscape. This thematic analysis aimed to highlight the interconnectedness of parental financial support, school resource allocation, and the overall student experience, providing valuable implications for policy and practice in the region.

4.6.1.2 Importance of Supplementary Fees

Respondent A1 expressed that the payment of supplementary fees was pivotal for maintaining the quality of education provided at the school. She noted, *"When parents pay supplementary fees, it enables us to provide better resources and organize extracurricular activities that keep students engaged and excited about learning."* This statement brought forward the direct correlation between financial contributions from parents and the quality of educational offerings, suggesting that supplementary fees were not merely an additional burden but rather an investment in students' holistic development. Respondent B1 noted that: *"When parents pay PTA fees it can be used to motivate teachers to teach effectively, but only a few positively respond, and this affects school routine activities and might force teachers not to teach, hence creating room for students to dodge classes and eventually leave school"*. Respondent C1 noted that: *"Parents delay to pay developmental fees negatively relates with student retention rate"*

Moreover, B2 explained that when fees were consistently paid, it translated into improved retention rates, as students felt a stronger sense of belonging and were more motivated to participate in school activities. When schools offered diverse programs and resources funded by supplementary fees, students developed a deeper connection to their education, strengthening their commitment to staying enrolled. This correlation between financial investment and educational quality called attention to the necessity for schools to communicate the importance

of timely fee payments to parents, emphasizing the broader benefits to student learning and retention.

4.6.1.3 Financial Stability

From the viewpoint of B3, the timely payment of supplementary fees directly impacted the school's financial stability, which in turn affected student retention. He remarked, *"When fees are paid on time, the school can effectively plan its budget and allocate resources towards essential programs. This financial predictability ensures that students have access to necessary materials and activities that enhance their learning experience."* His insights emphasized the importance of a stable financial environment for schools, which was heavily dependent on the prompt payment of fees by parents. Furthermore, the respondent emphasized that financial instability resulting from delayed payments led to cuts in programs and resources, creating a less attractive educational environment for students. When schools faced budget constraints, they always struggled to provide the necessary support and opportunities for their students, directly influencing retention rates. This financial unpredictability could create a ripple effect, where students felt the consequences of insufficient resources and programming, leading to disengagement and increased dropout rates.

4.6.1.4 Educational Equity

Respondent D5 provided valuable understanding into how the payment of supplementary fees affected students' experiences and decisions regarding their education. He explained, *"When parents are able to pay for supplementary fees, it means we can have better facilities and more activities, which makes school more enjoyable like other schools where parents willingly pay fees. However, those who can't pay often feel left out, which can affect their decision to stay."* This observation illustrated how disparities in fee payment created an environment of inequality among students, where those unable to afford supplementary fees felt marginalized. Additionally, his comments suggested that the ability to participate in extracurricular activities funded by these fees played a critical role in shaping students' overall school experience and their inclination to continue their education. When students perceived that their financial circumstances impacted their engagement and sense of belonging, it led to feelings of exclusion. This inequity further worsened dropout rates, as students who felt disconnected from the school

community might be less likely to persist through challenges. Creating a more equitable environment, where all students have access to the same opportunities regardless of their financial background, was essential for enhancing retention.

4.6.1.5 Student Morale

Respondent E4 highlighted the impact of supplementary fees on classroom dynamics and student morale. She stated, *“Students who pay their fees tend to be more engaged and interested in their education. Those who struggle with fees often show lower participation rates and can feel discouraged.”* This observation reflected the broader theme that financial support from parents not only affected school resources but also influenced student attitudes towards their education.

Her insights revealed a connection between financial responsibility and student motivation, indicating that consistent fee payment promoted a positive learning environment while non-payment led to disengagement and potential dropout. When students observed a disparity in engagement levels based on financial contributions, it created a cycle of discouragement, further impacting their educational experiences. It was crucial for schools to develop strategies that promoted timely fee payments while raising an inclusive atmosphere where all students felt valued and supported in their educational journey.

4.7 Objective 3: Effect of parents’ follow up of their children in schools and students’ retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District

The study examined the effect of parents’ follow-up of their children in schools on students’ retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District, revealing a significant positive correlation that underscored the importance of parental engagement in education.

Table 11: Research question 3: How does Parents' follow up of learners affect Students' Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?

Correlations

Effect of parents' follow up of their children in schools and students' retention rate in USE schools		Parents' follow-up of children	Student Retention
Parents' follow-up of children	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	505	
Student Retention	Pearson Correlation	.445**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	505	505

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

Primary data 2024

The correlation analysis indicated a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship between parents' follow-up of their children in schools and students' retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools. The Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.445 ($r = 0.445^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), a p-value of less than 0.01 led us to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis suggesting that increased parental involvement in monitoring their children's education was associated with higher retention rates. According to Cohen (1988), this correlation was moderate and the moderate positive correlation indicated that when parents actively engaged in their children's academic journey such as making visits to the school or communicating with teachers students were more likely to remain enrolled. With a sample size of 505 participants, the significance of this relationship emphasized the critical role parents play in nurturing an educational environment conducive to student retention, highlighting the need for schools to encourage parental engagement as a strategy to improve student outcomes.

4.7.1 Thematic Analysis of Parental Follow-Up and Student Retention in Amuru District Secondary Schools

4.7.1.1 Introduction

In examining the effects of parental follow-up on their children's academic performance and attendance on student retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District, I engaged in discussions with five sets of key respondents: A, Head Teachers, B, Board of Governors (BOG) representatives, C, Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) representatives, D, student leaders, and E, class teachers. The analysis of their responses revealed significant themes highlighting the crucial role of parental involvement in motivating students to persist in their educational journeys.

The diverse insights shared by these respondents painted a vivid picture of how parental follow-up can shape students' attitudes toward their education. Each participant's perspective underscored the multifaceted nature of parental involvement, emphasizing that it extended beyond mere oversight of academic performance. This thematic analysis seeks to illuminate the various dimensions of parental engagement and its profound impact on student retention, ultimately advocating for increased involvement from parents to bolster their children's educational experiences.

4.7.1.2 Student Motivation

Respondent A1 articulated that parents' follow-up on their children's academic performance and attendance profoundly impacted students' decisions to remain enrolled. She stated, *“When parents actively check on their children's progress, it sends a message that education is important. Students are more likely to take their studies seriously when they know their parents are involved.”* This sentiment underscored the direct correlation between parental engagement and student motivation.

Furthermore, she elaborated that consistent follow-up from parents often led to improved attendance rates, as students felt accountable for their actions. This accountability reinforced the notion that parental involvement served as a powerful motivator for students to remain committed to their education. By fostering a culture of accountability, parents not only supported

their children's academic journeys but also instilled a sense of responsibility that can influence their long-term educational aspirations.

4.7.1.3 Support during Challenging times

Respondent B1 emphasized the importance of parental involvement during challenging academic periods. He remarked, *“In times of difficulty, such as during exam preparations or when grades are low, a parent’s follow-up can be a lifeline for students. It shows them that they are not alone in their struggles.”* His observations highlighted how parental support could create a safety net for students facing academic challenges.

Moreover, the respondent's perspective suggested that parents who actively engaged with their children during tough times significantly influenced students' decisions to persevere in their studies, thereby enhancing retention rates. When students felt that their parents genuinely invested in their success, they were more likely to approach academic challenges with resilience and determination. This supportive dynamic could lead to a greater likelihood of overcoming obstacles and maintaining enrollment in school.

4.7.1.4 Intrinsic Motivation

Respondent D1, offered a personal account of the impact of parental follow-up on his motivation to continue his education. He stated, *“My parents check on my grades and ask me about school; knowing they care makes me want to do better. It motivates me to stay in school.”* This reflection illustrated the positive effect of parental engagement on students' intrinsic motivation. The acknowledgment of parental support could enhance a student’s sense of responsibility and desire to succeed, indicating that emotional investment from parents significantly contributed to students’ commitment to their educational pursuits.

Respondent D1’s comments suggested that regular check-ins and discussions about academic performance fostered a supportive environment that is conducive to learning. This atmosphere not only encouraged students to remain enrolled but also inspired them to strive for academic excellence. The consistency of parental involvement created a foundation for students to feel valued and understood, which motivated them to overcome academic hurdles. The importance of this supportive structure was further highlighted by insights from Respondent A5, who noted,

“We discourage impromptu visits by parents to school, but always invite them for class meetings and visitation days where we organize discussions with parents on the progress of their children. This, in turn, motivates the children to take their studies seriously and be retained in school.”

This approach reflected a structured way of fostering parental engagement, emphasizing that when parents are actively involved in their children's education, it reinforced students' intrinsic motivations. This perspective reinforced the notion that parental involvement goes beyond simple encouragement; it actively shaped students' academic identities. The organized discussions between teachers and parents created an opportunity for parents to understand their children's progress, which was pivotal in instilling a sense of accountability in students. When students know their parents were informed and engaged, they were more likely to take their studies seriously, as they felt a shared responsibility for their academic success. This dynamic highlighted the interplay between external support and internal motivation, where parental interest acted as a catalyst for students' academic perseverance.

Ultimately, the insights from both Respondents D1 and A5 illustrated that intrinsic motivation could be a powerful driver for students to persist in their education, particularly in the face of challenges. The collective emphasis on parental involvement revealed a critical pathway for fostering resilience and commitment among students. By demonstrating genuine interest in their children's educational journeys, parents played a crucial role in shaping their motivation and commitment to schooling. This intrinsic motivation, cultivated through supportive and structured engagement, significantly enhanced students' educational experiences, leading to higher retention rates and improved academic outcomes.

4.7.1.5 Student's Participation in class

Respondent E5, echoed the sentiments expressed by the other respondents, highlighting how parental follow-up contributes to a positive classroom atmosphere. She noted, *“When parents follow up, it encourages students to participate more in class because they know their efforts are being monitored at home. This can lead to better retention.”* Her observations pointed to the ripple effect of parental involvement on classroom dynamics, suggesting that the awareness of parental engagement significantly impacted student behavior and academic engagement.

When students perceived parental interest in their education, they were more likely to engage actively in school activities. This heightened participation manifested in various forms, such as asking questions, collaborating with classmates, and contributing to discussions, all of which enhanced their learning experiences. The teacher's insight underscored the connection between home support and classroom engagement, illustrating that students who felt their parents cared about their education were more inclined to take an active role in their learning. Furthermore, this engagement fostered a sense of community within the classroom, as students who participated more often also contributed to a collaborative and interactive learning environment.

A positive classroom atmosphere encouraged collaboration and interaction among peers, contributing to a supportive network that enhanced retention rates. Respondent E's emphasis on parental follow-up revealed the critical role that external support played in shaping students' classroom behavior. When students felt supported both at home and in school, they were more likely to commit to their education and pursued their academic goals. This sense of belonging motivated students to not only stay enrolled but also actively contribute to the learning environment, as they recognized that their efforts are valued by both their parents and teachers.

Ultimately, the insights from Respondent E5 highlighted the significance of fostering a supportive educational ecosystem, where parental involvement was seen as a key factor in promoting student engagement and retention. The interconnectedness of home support and classroom dynamics created a framework for educational success, where students thrived academically and socially. By encouraging parents to participate in their children's educational journeys, schools cultivated an environment that empowers students to take ownership of their learning, thereby enhancing their overall academic experience and long-term retention.

4.7.1.6 Discipline

An interview with Respondent A2, revealed that, *“we have a disciplinary committee that is responsible for handling cases of indiscipline of the learners, and parents always come whenever called upon to listen to issues raised against their children.”* This commitment from parents plays a crucial role in enforcing discipline among students, as indiscipline is recognized as one of the major causes of school dropouts, directly impacting retention rates. The collaborative effort

between parents and school administrators not only addresses behavioral issues but also reinforced a culture of discipline that encouraged students to remain engaged in their education.

His insights emphasized the importance of parental involvement in the disciplinary process, suggesting that when parents took an active role, they helped reinforce positive behaviors and addressed issues early on. This proactive approach fostered a conducive environment for learning, where students were less likely to engage in behaviors that might lead to dropout. The engagement of parents in discussions about discipline also sent a strong message to students about the shared responsibility of adults in their lives, reinforcing the idea that their education and conduct mattered to both teachers and parents.

Further supporting this perspective, Respondent C4, noted that, *“when parents collaborate with schools in taking action against indiscipline behavior of their children, it encourages the children to take responsibility for their actions, knowing that they are being guided by adults who care about their well-being.”* This collaboration not only empowered students to be accountable for their actions but also fostered a sense of community where they understood the importance of discipline and respect within the school environment. The collective effort of parents and educators created a safety net that helped students navigate the challenges they face, reinforcing their commitment to stay in school.

Overall, when parents closely monitored their children’s behavior while in school, students received consistent messages about acceptable conduct from both teachers and parents. This dual reinforcement helped students overcome challenges and learn accountability in a structured and caring environment, ultimately contributing to higher retention rates. The partnership between parents and educators was vital in shaping a positive school culture, where discipline was maintained, and students felt supported and valued in their educational journey.

4.8 Objective 4: To establish the relationship between parents’ participation in school meetings and students’ retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District

The study investigated the relationship between parents’ participation in school meetings and students’ retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District, revealing a negligible correlation that suggested limited influence of parental attendance at school meetings on student retention.

Table 12: Research question 4: What is the relationship between Parents’ participation in school meetings and Students’ Retention rate in USE Schools in Amuru District?

Correlations

relationship between Parents’ participation in school meetings and Students’ Retention rate in USE		Participation in school meetings	Student Retention
Participation in school meetings	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	505	
Student Retention	Pearson Correlation	.763**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	
	N	505	505

Primary data 2024

The correlation analysis revealed a very strong positive statistically significant relationship between parents’ participation in school meetings and students’ retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.763^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). The relationship was statistically significant because the calculated p- value was less than the 0.05 criterion thus a p-value less than 0.05 led us to conclude that there was evidence against the null hypothesis. According to Cohen (1988), this high significant correlation suggested that higher levels of parental involvement in school meetings were associated with improved student retention. One possible explanation was that active participation fostered better communication and collaboration between parents and teachers, allowing parents to stay informed about their children's academic progress and challenges. This involvement not only enhanced parental support at home but also signaled to students the importance of education, motivating them to prioritize their schooling. Overall, promoting parental engagement in school meetings could be a vital strategy for enhancing student retention in USE schools, encouraging schools to implement initiatives that facilitated parent attendance and involvement.

4.8.1 Thematic Analysis of Parental Participation in School Meetings and Student Retention

4.8.1.1 Introduction

To explore the relationship between parental participation in school meetings and student retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District, I conducted interviews with five sets of key respondents: A, Head Teachers, B, Board of Governors (BOG) representatives, C, Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) representatives, D, student leaders, and E, class teachers. Their responses revealed significant themes underscoring the vital role of parental involvement in school governance and its influence on students' educational experiences and retention.

This thematic analysis aimed to articulate the insights gathered from the interviews, illustrating how parental participation in school meetings can enhance the educational environment, promote student engagement, and ultimately improve retention rates. The collective perspectives of the respondents provided a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between parental involvement and student success in the educational landscape of Amuru District.

4.8.1.2 Collaboration

Respondent A1 highlighted that parental participation in school meetings played a crucial role in shaping student retention rates. She explained, *“When parents attend meetings, it shows their commitment to their children's education. This engagement helps create a supportive school environment that encourages students to stay.”* This observation underscored the importance of parental involvement in school governance; when parents took an active role in school activities, it fostered a sense of community and accountability that positively influenced students' perceptions of their education.

Furthermore, she emphasized that regular interaction between parents and the school could lead to enhanced collaboration, which was essential for student success. Respondent B3, remarked, *“Parents attend meetings, and by doing so, they get to know what is happening at school and are enabled to monitor their children's performance.”* This form of collaboration created a unified front that not only supported students academically but also fostered their emotional and social

well-being. When parents were informed and engaged, they provided better support for their children, reinforcing the idea that education was a shared responsibility. The establishment of a culture of involvement cultivated an environment conducive to student retention, where students feel valued and supported in their educational journeys.

However, the importance of this collaboration was not always recognized. Respondent B1, voiced concerns, stating, *“Parents have an ‘I don’t care’ attitude. So, if parents continue shying away or ignoring meetings, then the students’ performance will dwindle, and this might force them to quit school.”* This perspective highlighted the detrimental effects of parental disengagement on student outcomes. When parents neglected their role in school activities, it could lead to a lack of support for students, making them feel isolated and less motivated to succeed.

Conversely, Respondent D3, noted, *“Students whose parents respond to meetings develop a close relationship with the teachers who personally know their parents, and this boosts their performance in class. With this, the students also put in more effort not to disappoint the parents as well as teachers who are working tirelessly to retain them in school and above all improve their performance.”* This comment illustrated the positive impact of strong parent-teacher relationships on student motivation and academic success. When students know that their parents and teachers were working together for their benefit, they were more likely to be engaged and committed to their education.

In conclusion, collaboration between parents and schools was essential for fostering an environment that supports student retention. By encouraging parental involvement in school meetings and governance, schools could build a supportive community that motivated students to excel academically and remained in school. The contrasting views among respondents highlighted the complexity of parental involvement and its direct influence on student outcomes, underscoring the need for continuous efforts to engage parents and created a culture of participation that benefits all students.

4.8.1.3 School governance

Respondent B3 elaborated on the significance of parental involvement in school governance and its impact on educational support. He stated, *“Active parents in meetings are more likely to*

advocate for their children's needs and support school initiatives. This involvement translates into better resources and an environment that encourages students to remain in school." This perspective highlighted that when parents actively participate in decision-making processes, they become more interested in their children's education and the overall school environment.

His insights suggested that parental participation not only enhanced school governance but also strengthened the support network for students. When parents advocated for resources and programs that benefitted their children, it created a more nurturing educational environment. The relationship between parents and the school became collaborative, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for student outcomes. Respondent A2, noted, *"It is during parents' meetings that relevant resolutions regarding the well-being and academics of learners are reached. For instance, PTA charges on parents and what they will be used for, issues of discipline, students' welfare, and many others. These resolutions are what guide the daily management and governance of the school."* This observation underscored the critical role of parental input in shaping school policies and practices, ensuring that the educational needs of students are prioritized and addressed effectively.

Furthermore, the investment of parents in school governance positively affected retention rates, as students were more likely to stay in an environment that actively addresses their needs and supports their academic growth. When parents were engaged in the governance of the school, it not only enhanced the educational experience for students but also cultivated a culture of accountability and transparency within the school community. This partnership between parents and school officials fostered an atmosphere where students feel supported, understood, and motivated to succeed.

Therefore, the active involvement of parents in school governance was essential for creating an educational environment conducive to student retention and success. By participating in meetings and decision-making processes, parents could advocate for necessary resources and initiatives that directly impact their children's learning experiences. This collaboration between parents and school leaders played a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape, ultimately benefiting students and enhancing their commitment to staying in school.

4.8.1.4 Student Engagement

From the perspective of Respondent D1, the participation of parents in school meetings had a direct effect on student engagement in school activities. He mentioned, *“When my parents come to meetings, it makes me feel like my education is important. It pushes me to get involved in school clubs and activities, where I feel happy when I make presentations before parents when my parent is in the audience; this makes me want to stay in school.”* This comment illustrated how parental involvement could enhance students' sense of belonging and motivation, which were crucial for their engagement in school.

His experience suggested that when parents were engaged in school activities, it fostered a positive school culture that encouraged students to participate and remain enrolled. This involvement reinforced the idea that education was a shared responsibility, motivating students to take an active role in their learning and to pursue opportunities for personal and academic growth. The presence of parents at school events served as a form of acknowledgment and validation for students, enhancing their connection to the school community. The positive reinforcement from parental participation was a significant factor influencing students' commitment to their education and their desire to stay in school.

Furthermore, the qualitative data indicated a pressing need for more effort in mobilizing parents in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools to be involved in the education of their children in order to achieve a high student retention rate. When parents were actively engaged, they could work in partnership with school management to address challenges affecting the well-being of their children, which often drove them out of school. By promoting a collaborative environment, where parents and educators shared responsibility for student success, schools created a supportive framework that encouraged consistent attendance and academic achievement.

4.9 Analysis of ANOVA Results for Factors Influencing Student Retention

The analysis of ANOVA results highlighted the overall significance of the regression model examining factors influencing student retention in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools.

Table 13: Analysis of ANOVA Results for Factors Influencing Student Retention

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	307.172	4	76.793	12.237	.000 ^b
	Residual	3131.445	499	6.275		
	Total	3438.617	503			

a. Dependent Variable: Student Retention
b. Predictors: (Constant), Parents' follow-up of children, Participation in school meetings , Parents' provision of school needs, Parents' payment of supplementary fees

The ANOVA results provided insight into the overall significance of the regression model assessing the relationship between parental involvement and student retention in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools. The model exhibited a significant F-value of 12.237 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the combined effect of the predictors—parents' follow-up of children, participation in school meetings, parents' provision of school needs, and parents' payment of supplementary fees—significantly predicted student retention. This finding suggested that the independent variables collectively explained a substantial portion of the variance in student retention, affirming the relevance of parental involvement in the educational process.

The Sum of Squares for the regression model was 307.172, which represented the variability in student retention that could be attributed to the independent variables included in the model. In contrast, the Residual Sum of Squares was 3131.445, indicating the variability in student retention that was not explained by the predictors. The large difference between the regression and residual sums of squares highlighted that while the model explained a significant portion of the variability, there were still many other factors affecting student retention that were not captured by the current set of independent variables.

The degree of freedom (df) for the regression model was 4, corresponding to the number of predictors used, while the residual df is 499, representing the number of observations minus the number of predictors minus one. This suggested that the model was robust and had sufficient data points to produce reliable estimates. The Mean Square for the regression (76.793) indicated the average amount of variability explained by each predictor in the model, while the residual mean square (6.275) reflected the average variability not explained by the predictors.

Overall, the significant ANOVA results suggested that enhancing parental involvement, particularly through follow-up actions and provision of educational needs, played a crucial role in improving student retention in USE schools. This analysis reinforced the need for educational stakeholders to prioritize strategies that engaged parents, fostered an environment conducive to academic success and sustained enrollment.

4.10 Analysis of Coefficients Influencing Student Retention in Universal Secondary Education Schools

Table 14: Analysis of Coefficients Influencing Student Retention

Coefficients^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	22.946	1.198		19.153	.000
	1. Parents' provision of school needs	.146	.041	.165	3.576	.000
	2. Parents' payment of supplementary fees	.135	.040	.172	3.350	.001
	3. Participation in school meetings	-.097	.051	-.090	-1.910	.057
	4. Parents' follow-up of children	.178	.036	.220	4.946	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Student Retention						
Primary data 2024						

The regression analysis results revealed that the overall model was significant, with a constant value of 22.946 ($p < 0.001$), suggesting a strong baseline effect on student retention in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools. The constant term represented the expected value of student retention when all independent variables were held at zero. This baseline provided context for interpreting the contributions of each variable in the model. The significance of the constant highlighted that even without any parental involvement, student retention was influenced by other factors not captured in this model.

Among the independent variables, parents' provision of school needs showed a positive and significant relationship with student retention, with a coefficient of 0.146 ($p < 0.001$). This indicated that as parents provided more school needs, student retention improved. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.165 suggested that this variable had a moderate effect on retention rates. This finding emphasized the importance of parents ensuring that their children had access to essential educational materials, which positively influenced their academic engagement and persistence in school.

Parents' payment of supplementary fees also had a significant and positive impact on student retention, with a coefficient of 0.135 ($p < 0.001$) and a Beta of 0.172. This showed that timely payment of supplementary fees was crucial for maintaining students' enrollment and retention in USE schools. The ability of parents to meet financial obligations played a vital role in supporting their children's educational journey, as it prevented disruptions caused by financial constraints. This reinforced the need for schools and policymakers to consider financial support systems for families, ensuring that monetary barriers did not impede student retention.

Conversely, participation in school meetings displayed a negative coefficient of -0.097 ($p = 0.057$), suggesting a marginally non-significant relationship with student retention. Although the relationship was not statistically significant at the conventional 0.05 level, it was close to this threshold and indicated that increased participation might not necessarily translate into improved retention rates. Finally, parents' follow-up of children presented a strong positive coefficient of 0.178 ($p < 0.001$) and a Beta of 0.220, highlighting that proactive engagement by parents in monitoring their children's academic progress significantly contributed to student retention. This suggested that consistent follow-up encouraged students to remain committed to their education,

demonstrating that parental involvement was key to fostering a supportive educational environment.

Overall, parents' follow-up of children emerged as the most influential independent variable in predicting student retention, emphasising the critical role of active parental involvement in supporting students to remain in school.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed the results obtained from the study on the factors influencing students' retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District. It reflected on the relationships identified between parental involvement—specifically in the provision of school needs, payment of supplementary fees, follow-up on children's education, and participation in school meetings—and students' retention rates. The chapter also summarized the findings, drew conclusions based on the data, provided recommendations for stakeholders, and suggested areas for further research.

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Relationship between parents' provision of school needs and students' retention rate in USE schools

The findings of this study revealed a moderate and statistically significant relationship between parents' provision of school needs and students' retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.305 ($p < 0.01$) indicated a positive association; as parents improved their support through the provision of necessary school supplies, students were more likely to remain enrolled and attended school regularly. This result emphasized the importance of parental involvement in fostering consistent student retention. The robust sample of 504 participants further reinforced the significance of these findings, highlighting how critical parental contributions were to educational outcomes. This aligned with Phaustine, Stanley & Simon's (2023) research, which found a statistically significant effect of parental provision of basic needs on student retention in Busia County, Kenya. However, their study was limited geographically, focusing solely on Kenya, which contrasted with the current study's geographical scope, examining similar dynamics within Amuru District, Uganda.

In examining qualitative insights gathered from key stakeholders in secondary education, namely A, Head Teachers, B, Board of Governors (BOG) representatives, C, Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) representatives, D, student leaders, and E, class teachers, came out with several recurring themes that emerged to support the quantitative findings. Respondent A1's perspective clearly articulated the connection between the provision of school needs and students' retention rates. She noted, "When parents provided uniforms, textbooks, and other essential materials, it not only reduced dropout rates but also enhanced students' confidence and sense of belonging in the school." This observation aligned with existing literature, specifically Lukendo's (2011) findings that parental contributions significantly affected children's performance in examinations. Both studies illustrated the critical role that material support played in fostering an environment conducive to learning. However, Lukendo's research primarily focused on primary education, which contrasted with the current study's focus on secondary education. This highlighted a gap in understanding how parental involvement at the secondary level uniquely influenced retention rates.

From the perspective of B1, the impact of parental support transcended material provision and extended to students' motivation and engagement. He expressed that "when parents actively participated in providing for their children's educational needs, it sent a powerful message about the value of education." This sentiment resonated with the findings from the A1 and C1, suggesting that students perceived their education as more valuable when they received support from their families. This observation contrasted with Lukendo (2011), who argued that the provision of scholastic materials directly correlated with children's performance in examinations, focusing on academic outcomes rather than motivation. The differences highlighted how parental support influenced both psychological well-being and academic success, emphasizing the multifaceted role of parental involvement in education.

Respondent D1's firsthand account provided an intimate view of how the availability of school materials affected peers' decisions to remain in school. His observation that "*when I see my friends who struggle to get basic materials drop out, it makes me appreciate what my parents provide for me*" highlighted the direct correlation between students' awareness of their classmates' situations and their motivations to continue their education. This insight reinforced the findings from the Respondents A4 and B3, affirming that the support provided by parents

fostered a culture of accountability and aspiration among students. In contrast, Lukendo's (2011) focus on primary education did not fully capture the influence of peer dynamics on student retention at the secondary level. The difference in focus suggested that while the themes of parental support and student motivation were common, the specific contexts and educational levels led to varied implications for retention.

Lastly, Respondent E1's observations about classroom dynamics further illuminated the relationship between parental provision and academic performance. She remarked, "*Students who come to school prepared and equipped with what they need tend to participate more actively in class and perform better academically.*" This statement drew attention to the necessity for equitable access to educational resources, as disparities in parental provision could lead to unequal academic outcomes. The broader educational challenges faced by students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds underscored the urgent need for targeted interventions that supported families in fulfilling their children's educational needs. This aligned with Phaustine, Stanley & Simon's (2023) findings, which emphasized the importance of material support in promoting student retention. However, contrasting with the current study, their research was limited to primary education, highlighting a gap in understanding how these dynamics played out in secondary schools, thus necessitating further exploration of parental provision's broader implications.

In conclusion, parental support, both material and motivational, significantly influences students' retention in USE schools. Strengthening parental engagement and ensuring equitable access to educational resources are essential steps toward improving retention rates. Stakeholders must collaborate to create supportive environments that motivate students and address socioeconomic disparities, ultimately fostering sustained educational success for all learners.

5.1.2 Relationship between parents' payment of supplementary fees and students' retention rate in USE schools

The correlation analysis revealed a weak but statistically significant relationship between parents' payment of supplementary fees and students' retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District. The Pearson correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.143^{**}$, $p < 0.01$) suggested that as parents fulfill their supplementary fee obligations, there was a slight

increase in student retention rates. This finding aligned with the literature, which indicated that financial support played a role in enhancing educational access. For instance, World Bank (2009) highlighted that school fees significantly deterred poorer parents from enrolling their children, underscoring the importance of financial contributions in improving student retention. Similarly, Kanyongo (2005) argued that limited financial resources were a primary barrier to education in developing countries, emphasizing the necessity of parental support. However, the weak correlation also suggested that while supplementary fees contributed positively to retention, they were not the sole factor influencing students' decisions to remain in school. This aligned with the findings of Achieng & Njui (2020), which emphasized that parental involvement extended beyond financial contributions, incorporating emotional and academic support.

The thematic analysis further explored the perspectives of educational stakeholders regarding the impact of parents' payment of supplementary fees on student retention. The insights from Respondent A1 highlighted the essential role of supplementary fees in enhancing the quality of education. She stated, *"When parents pay supplementary fees, it enables us to offer better resources and organize extracurricular activities that keep students engaged."* This viewpoint echoed findings from Nthiga (2014), which emphasized the significance of parental involvement in promoting a conducive learning environment. In contrast, the findings also suggested that financial constraints exacerbated feelings of inequality among students. Respondent D3's observations about marginalized students feeling left out due to fee disparities illustrated a critical issue in educational equity. The contrast lied in the fact that while supplementary fees contributed to resource availability, they also highlighted existing socioeconomic disparities, reinforcing Eamon's (2005) assertion that low socioeconomic status negatively affected academic achievement.

Additionally, the insights from Respondent B2 emphasized the need for timely fee payments to ensure financial stability within the school. He remarked, *"When fees are paid on time, the school can effectively plan its budget."* This perspective aligned with the literature on the financial implications of fee payments on educational institutions. However, the findings also indicated that delayed payments hindered the school's ability to provide essential resources, as noted by Respondent B2. This highlighted a contrast with the findings of Kasya et al. (2019), where the focus was on administrative interventions rather than direct parental financial

contributions. While both studies acknowledge the importance of school financial health, the current findings placed greater emphasis on the immediate impacts of parental payments, underscoring the need for a multifaceted approach to improving student retention.

The reflections of Respondent E2 further reinforced the notion that supplementary fees impacted not only school resources but also student morale and engagement. She stated, “*Students who pay their fees tend to be more engaged and invested in their education.*” This observation was consistent with findings from Nthiga (2014) regarding the positive correlation between parental support and student engagement. However, the current study highlighted a potential gap in understanding how financial disparities affected student motivation, contrasting with Kasya et al. (2019), which primarily focused on the broader administrative context without delving into the emotional and psychological aspects of financial contributions. This discrepancy emphasized the need for a comprehensive understanding of how parental financial support and engagement influenced student retention.

In conclusion, parental payment of supplementary fees, although showing a weak correlation with student retention, plays an important role in shaping educational quality, resource availability, and student motivation. Addressing issues of timely payments and socioeconomic disparities is crucial for fostering an equitable environment that supports consistent student retention. A comprehensive approach that combines financial support with emotional and academic engagement is essential to enhance retention outcomes in USE schools

5.1.3 Effect of parents’ follow-up of their children in schools and students’ retention rate in USE schools

The findings from the correlation analysis revealed a moderate and statistically significant relationship between parental follow-up and students’ retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District. With a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.445 ($p < 0.01$), this suggested that increased parental involvement, such as monitoring academic progress and maintaining communication with teachers, correlated with higher student retention rates. This positive association underscored the vital role that parents played in creating an educational environment conducive to student success. These findings resonated with the literature, which emphasized that parental follow-up significantly reduced discipline issues, enhanced student

motivation, and fostered a positive school experience. Lynch (2019) highlighted the importance of a collaborative partnership between parents and teachers, which not only reassured students that their education was valued but also bridged cultural differences that hindered learning.

The insights gathered from the thematic analysis further corroborated these quantitative findings. Respondent A2's observations revealed a profound understanding of the direct correlation between parental engagement and student motivation. When parents took an active interest in their children's education, it signaled to students that their academic efforts were important. This perspective aligned with Nix et al. (2012), who argued that teachers must establish relationships with students and their families. By fostering communication through school visits and engagement activities, schools could create an environment that encouraged students to remain committed to their education.

Additionally, Respondent B3 articulated the significance of parental involvement during challenging academic periods, framing it as a lifeline for students. His remarks reflected the idea that parental support could effectively mitigate the emotional challenges students face, particularly during exams or periods of low academic performance. This observation echoed the sentiments of Balli et al. (2008), who asserted that parents must actively monitor their children's academic progress and engage in school decisions to enhance retention levels. The convergence of these findings suggested that the more involved parents were, especially during critical times, the more likely students were to persist in their educational journeys.

The personal account from Respondent D1 further illustrated the positive impact of parental follow-up on student motivation. His statement revealed how regular check-ins and discussions about academic performance fostered a supportive environment, which was crucial for encouraging students to stay in school. This intrinsic motivation highlighted by the student leader supports the assertion made by Galindo and Sheldon (2012) that understanding the nuances of parental involvement versus engagement was essential for schools seeking to improve retention. By cultivating meaningful connections with families, schools could enhance their efforts to keep students enrolled.

Respondent E5's reflections emphasize how parental involvement contributed to a positive classroom atmosphere. When parents followed up, students felt monitored and accountable,

which translated to increased participation and engagement in school activities. This finding resonated with Fehrer (2014), who pointed out that parental engagement not only benefited student performance but also opened lines of communication between the school and families. However, it was worth noting that not all parental involvement strategies might be effective for every family. As Fehrer (2014) cautioned, the opportunities schools provided for parental involvement might not align with family life situations or expectations, creating potential barriers to engagement.

In conclusion, parental follow-up is a vital component in supporting student retention in USE schools. Active parental engagement, especially during challenging academic periods, fosters motivation, accountability, and a positive school environment. Recognizing that family circumstances influence the effectiveness of engagement strategies is crucial. Schools should strive to develop inclusive approaches that accommodate diverse family backgrounds, ensuring that all students benefit from meaningful parental support, ultimately improving retention outcomes.

5.1.4 Relationship between parents' participation in school meetings and students' retention rate in USE schools

The analysis of findings concerning the relationship between parental participation in school meetings and students' retention rates in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools in Amuru District revealed a robust correlation, underscored by a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r=0.763^{**}$, with a significance level of $p<0.01$. This substantial correlation indicated that increased parental involvement in school meetings was significantly associated with improved student retention rates. The qualitative insights gathered from interviews with key stakeholders—namely, A, Head Teachers, B, Board of Governors (BOG) representatives, C, Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) representatives, D, student leaders, and E, class teachers, further illuminate the multifaceted nature of this relationship. The findings resonated with literature on parental involvement, which asserted that such engagement played a pivotal role in shaping students' educational experiences and outcomes.

Respondent A1 emphasized the critical role of parental participation in fostering a supportive school environment, suggesting that when parents were actively involved, it signaled their commitment to their children's education. This perspective aligned with Rockwell, Andre, and

Hawley (2008), who argued that parental engagement in school functions, such as meetings, created a vital partnership between home and school, enhancing students' academic development and success. Furthermore, Hornby and Blackwell (2018) highlighted historical efforts, such as the establishment of the National Congress of Mothers, which aimed to promote effective education through parental involvement. This historical context reinforced the idea that parental engagement had long been recognized as a cornerstone of educational success. In contrast, it was important to note that while the findings supported the notion of active parental involvement as beneficial, they also highlighted the need for ongoing strategies to sustain this involvement, especially in areas where socio-economic challenges inhibited parents' capacity to engage.

Respondent B1 provided additional insights, emphasizing that parents who actively participated in school governance were more likely to advocate for their children's needs. This involvement led to better resources and a conducive environment for learning. This perspective complemented Tumwehe's (2024) findings, which demonstrated a positive relationship between parental involvement in school management and pupil retention, specifically indicating that engagement in School Management Committee meetings was crucial for improving retention rates ($r= 0.512$, $Sig=0.01$). Moreover, Tumwehe's study highlighted that parents' involvement extended beyond attendance to include active participation in decision-making processes, reinforcing the notion that such involvement was integral to fostering a supportive educational environment. However, it was essential to contrast these findings with the geographical focus of Tumwehe's study, which concentrated on Western Uganda. The current research in Northern Uganda revealed unique contextual challenges that influenced parental engagement, necessitating tailored approaches to enhance participation.

Respondent D1's perspective further highlighted the intrinsic motivational effects of parental involvement in school meetings. He articulated that his parents' attendance made him feel valued and encouraged his active participation in school activities. This finding reflected the importance of creating a positive school culture that prioritized student engagement. The literature reinforced this idea, as Islam (2017) found that regular parent-teacher meetings significantly impacted students' academic performance and attitudes, particularly in disadvantaged communities. While the findings from Amuru District resonated with these insights, they also expanded the scope of inquiry to include additional dimensions of parental involvement, such as financial support for

school needs, which further enriched the understanding of how such involvement impacts retention rates.

The reflections from Respondent E1 underscored the necessity of bridging home and school through parental participation. She noted that when parents attended meetings, it reinforced the message that education was valued and supported. This perspective aligned with the historical context provided by Hornby and Blackwell (2018), which emphasized the role of parental involvement in cultivating a supportive educational environment. However, it was crucial to contrast this view with the challenges faced in implementing effective communication strategies to engage all parents consistently. For instance, disparities in parental engagement based on socio-economic status hindered equal participation, necessitating targeted interventions to ensure that all parents contributed to their children's education.

In conclusion, parental participation in school meetings exhibits a strong positive relationship with student retention in USE schools. Active engagement fosters a supportive school climate, enhances communication between home and school, and motivates students to remain in school. To maximize these benefits, it is essential to address socio-economic barriers and develop targeted strategies that promote inclusive parental involvement, ensuring that all students can benefit from a collaborative educational environment conducive to their sustained retention.

5.2 Summary

The analysis underscored the significant positive impact of parental involvement on student retention in USE schools in Amuru District. Quantitative findings revealed that increased parental follow-up and active participation, especially in school meetings, were strongly correlated with higher retention rates. Parental follow-up, including monitoring academic progress and maintaining communication with teachers, fosters motivation, discipline, and a supportive environment that encouraged students to persist in their education.

Qualitative insights from stakeholders further reinforced these findings, illustrating that parental engagement, through involvement in school meetings, governance, and decision-making, created a partnership between home and school. Such involvement signaled commitment, enhanced resource allocation, boosted student motivation, and cultivated a positive school culture. However, challenges such as socio-economic barriers and inconsistent communication strategies could hinder effective parental participation.

The literature aligned with these observations, emphasizing that sustained and meaningful parental engagement was vital for improving educational outcomes and student retention. To maximize these benefits, schools must develop inclusive strategies that addressed contextual challenges and promote equitable participation among all families. Overall, fostering strong, collaborative relationships between parents and schools was essential for creating an environment conducive to student success and sustained retention in secondary education.

5.3 Conclusion

The study emphasized the critical influence of parental involvement on student retention in USE schools in Amuru District. It highlighted that active parental involvement; whether through provision of school needs, making timely supplementary payment, following up children at school, or participating in school meetings, significantly contributed to students' ongoing enrollment and retention. These findings stressed the importance of maintaining strong, collaborative partnerships between parents and schools, recognizing that such relationships were fundamental to creating a conducive environment for student success and ensuring sustained retention in secondary education. Addressing economic and communication barriers remained essential to maximizing parental participation and supporting all students effectively.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommended that parents actively engaged in providing essential school supplies for their children to enhance retention rates in USE schools in Amuru District. Schools and local authorities should work together to raise awareness among parents about the importance of supplying necessary resources, which supported students' academic journeys and improved their overall performance.

Furthermore, it was crucial for parents to prioritize the timely payment of supplementary fees to facilitate students' continuous enrollment. Schools should communicate clearly with parents about the importance of these fees and provide flexible payment options to alleviate financial burdens. This strategy could help ensure that all students had access to the educational resources they needed, thereby increasing retention rates.

In addition, parents were encouraged to take a proactive role in following up on their children's academic progress. Schools should provide workshops or training sessions to equip parents with strategies for effectively monitoring their children's education. By fostering a culture of

communication between parents and teachers, students were more likely to receive the support they needed to overcome academic challenges and remain in school.

Finally, schools should promote and facilitate greater parental participation in school meetings and activities. Establishing regular forums for parent-school interactions could strengthen relationships and foster collaboration. Schools might consider offering incentives for parents to attend meetings, creating an inclusive environment where parents felt valued and encouraged to contribute to their children's educational experiences.

5.5 Areas for Further Studies

The study highlighted several areas for further research to deepen the understanding of factors influencing student retention in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools. Future studies could explore the impact of socioeconomic status on students' retention rates, considering how financial stability and resources affect parents' ability to support their children's education.

Additionally, research could investigate the role of community support systems in enhancing student retention in USE schools. By examining how community organizations, local businesses, and non-governmental organizations contribute to educational resources and parental engagement, a more comprehensive understanding of the retention landscape can be developed.

Another area for exploration is the effectiveness of various strategies employed by schools to engage parents and promote student retention. Investigating the outcomes of different outreach programs, communication methods, and parental involvement initiatives could provide valuable insights into best practices for fostering parent-school partnerships.

Lastly, studies could focus on the long-term effects of student retention on academic achievement and career prospects. Understanding how retention in USE schools correlates with students' future educational and employment outcomes would be beneficial for policymakers and educators aiming to improve the overall quality of education in the region.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Table for Determining Sample Size from a given Population

Table 2:

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

Note.—*N* is population size. *S* is sample size.

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Teachers

Dear respondent, a research study is being carried out on the relationship between parents' involvement and student retention in Universal Secondary Education schools in Amuru District for the award of Masters of Education in Education Management of Gulu University. You have been selected as one of the resourceful person to provide information on this subject.

I kindly request you to participate in this academic research and I assure you of confidentiality and that all findings will be strictly for Academic purposes.

Section I: General information of respondents

1. Position held: 1. Head of department () 2. Class teacher () 3. Teacher ()
2. Sex: 1. Male () 2. Female ()
3. Age group: 1. 20-30 years () 2. 31-40 years () 3. 41- 50 years ()
4. More than 50 years ()
4. Years in service: 1. 1-5 years () 2. 6-10 years () 3. 11-15 years ()
4. More than 15 years ()

Section II: Parents' provision of school needs

What is your level of agreement with the following statements on parents' provision of school needs? Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1. Strongly Disagree (SD) 2. Disagree (D) 3. Neutral (N) 4. Agree (A) 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Parents' provision of school needs	1	2	3	4	5
1. Parents always provide their children with scholastic materials when asked for.					
2. Parents frequently provide all instructional materials required for their children.					
3. Parents always provide meals for their children.					
4. Parents are always coerced to provide school needs for their children.					
5. Parents always provide adequate schools needs from their parents.					

Section III: Parents' payment of supplementary fees

What is your level of agreement with the following statements on parents' payment of supplementary fees? Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1. Strongly Disagree (SD) 2. Disagree (D) 3. Neutral (N) 4. Agree (A) 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Parents' payment of supplementary fees	1	2	3	4	5
1. Parents always pay fixed top-up fees per term in time.					
2. Special charges per term are always paid by parents as expected.					
3. Parents pay one-off annual fees for their children as required					
4. Parents pay school levies on time					
5. Parents are finding it difficult to pay supplementary fee for their children					

Section IV: Participation in school meetings

What is your level of agreement with the following statements on parents' participation in school meetings? Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1. Strongly Disagree (SD), 2. Disagree (D), 3. Neutral (N), 4. Agree (A) and 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Parents' participation in school meetings	1	2	3	4	5
1. The school often invites parents to attend school meetings.					
2. Parents are involved in school meetings more than three times in a year.					
3. Parents' turn-up for school meetings invitations is very high.					
4. Parents attend PTA annual general meetings whenever called upon					
5. Parents volunteer to take up leadership positions when asked during the PTA meetings.					

Section V: Parents' follow-up of children

What is your level of agreement with the following statements on parents' participation in school meetings? Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1. Strongly Disagree (SD), 2. Disagree (D), 3. Neutral (N), 4. Agree (A) and 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Parents' follow-up of children	1	2	3	4	5
1. Parents make Impromptu visits to talk to teachers about their children education progress					
2. School always invites parents for Class meetings/Class days					
3. School always invites parents for Class meetings/Class days					
4. Parents always come for Visitation days					
5. Parents always come to attend to their children's disciplinary issues whenever called upon.					

Section VI: Student retention (Dependent variable)

What is your level of agreement with the following statements on the extent to which parent involvement relates with student retention? Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1. Strongly Disagree (SD) 2. Disagree (D) 3. Neutral (N) 4. Agree (A) 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Dependent variable student retention	1	2	3	4	5
1. Our school admits relatively high number of students in senior one every year.					
2. All students consistently attend classes every school day without missing.					
3. Students always participate in all scheduled school activities throughout the academic term.					
4. Class teachers call attendance registers every day.					
5. Students always ask for permission to be absent from school.					
6. All students enrolled in a class complete the year and get promoted to the next class.					
7. All students admitted in senior one in this school complete Senior Four.					

Thank you

Appendix C: Questionnaire for Student Leaders and Students

Dear respondent,

A research study is being carried out on the relationship between parents' involvement and student retention in Universal Secondary Education in schools in Amuru District for the award of Masters of Education in Education Management of Gulu University. You have been selected as one of the resourceful person to provide information on this subject.

I kindly request you to participate in this academic research and I assure you of confidentiality and that all findings will be strictly for Academic purposes.

Section I: General information of respondents

1. Sex: 1. Male () 2. Female ()
2. Age group: 1. Below 15 years () 2. 16-20 years () 3. 20 years and more ()
3. Years studied in this school: 1. Less than 1years () 2. 1-3 years ()
3.more than 3years ()

Section II: Parents' provision of school needs

What is your level of agreement with the following statements on parents' provision of school needs? Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1. Strongly Disagree (SD) 2. Disagree (D) 3. Neutral (N) 4. Agree (A) 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Parents provision of school needs	1	2	3	4	5
1. Parents always provide their children with scholastic materials when asked for.					
2. Parents always offer to provide instructional materials for their children.					
3. Parents always provide meals for their children					
4. Parents are always forced to provide school needs for their children					
5. Students who receive adequate school needs from their parents are more likely to be retained.					
6. It's an obligation for parents to pay for their children`s medication in this school					

Section III: Parents' payment of supplementary fees

What is your level of agreement with the following statements on parents' payment of supplementary fees? Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1. Strongly Disagree (SD) 2. Disagree (D) 3. Neutral (N) 4. Agree (A) 5. Strongly Agree (SA).

Parents` payment of supplementary fees.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Parents always pay fixed top up fees per term in time.					
2. Special charges per term are always paid by parents as expected					
3. It's an obligation for parents to pay one-off annual fees for their children					
4. Students who receive financial support from their parents are more likely to be retained in school					
5. It's an obligation for every parent to pay PTA charges.					
6. Parents are finding it difficult to pay supplementary fee for their children in USE schools.					

Section IV: Participation in school meetings

What is your level of agreement with the following statements on parents' participation in school meetings? Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1. Strongly Disagree (SD) 2. Disagree (D) 3. Neutral (N) 4. Agree (A) 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Parents` participation in school meetings	1	2	3	4	5
1. The school often invites parents to attend school meetings.					
2. Parents are involved in school meetings more than three times in a year.					
3. Parents turn up for school meeting invitation is very high.					
4. Circulars are given by school authorities to parents who do attend school meetings.					
5. School meetings for parents about school programs and procedures are conducted at the beginning of the school year.					
6. Parents are invited to attend at least one school activity during the school year e.g. PTA General meeting					
7. Parents are included in the planning and implementation of school events.					

Section V: Parents' follow-up of children

What is your level of agreement with the following statements on parents' participation in school meetings? Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1. Strongly Disagree (SD), 2. Disagree (D), 3. Neutral (N), 4. Agree (A) and 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Parents' follow-up of children	1	2	3		4	5
1. Parents make Impromptu visits to talk to teachers about their children education progress						
2. School always invites parents for Class meetings/Class days						
3. School always invites parents for Class meetings/Class days						
4. Parents always come for Visitation days						
5. Parents always come to attend to their children's disciplinary issues whenever called upon.						

Section VI: Student retention (Dependent variable)

What is your level of agreement with the following statements on the extent to which parent involvement relates with student retention? Use a scale of 1-5 where; 1. Strongly Disagree (SD) 2. Disagree (D) 3. Neutral (N) 4. Agree (A) 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Dependent variable student retention	1	2	3	4	5
1. Our school admits relatively high number of students in senior one every year.					
2. All students consistently attend classes every school day without missing.					
3. Students always participate in all scheduled school activities throughout the academic term.					
4. Class teachers call attendance registers every day.					
5. Students always ask for permission to be absent from school.					
6. All students enrolled in a class complete the year and get promoted to the next class.					
7. All students admitted in senior one in this school complete Senior Four.					

Thank you

Appendix E: Interview Guide for Headteachers/Deputy Headteachers, BOG, PTA Representatives and student leaders

Interview Guiding Questions

Dear respondent,

A research study is being carried out on the relationship between parents' involvement and student retention in Universal Secondary Education in schools in Amuru District for the award of Masters of Education in Education Management of Gulu University.

You have been selected as one of the resourceful person to provide information on this subject.

I kindly request you to participate in this academic research and I assure you of confidentiality and that all findings will be strictly for Academic purposes.

Objective 1: To determine the relationship between parents' provision of school needs and students' retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.

1. Question for Headteachers/Deputy Headteachers:

- How do you perceive the impact of parents providing essential school needs (such as uniforms, textbooks, and supplies) on students' overall retention rates at your school?

2. Question for BOG/PTA Representatives:

- In your experience, how does the provision of school needs by parents influence students' motivation and willingness to continue their education at this school?

3. Question for Student Leaders:

- From your perspective, how does the availability of school materials provided by parents affect your classmates' decision to remain in school?

Objective 2: To explore the relationship between parents' payment of supplementary fees and students' retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.

1. Question for Headteachers/Deputy Headteachers/Classteachers:

- Can you describe the effect of parents paying supplementary fees (such as exam fees or extracurricular activity fees) on student retention in your school?

2. Question for BOG/PTA Representatives:

- How do you believe the timely payment of supplementary fees by parents impacts the financial stability of the school and, in turn, affects student retention?

3. Question for Student Leaders:

- What are your thoughts on how the payment of supplementary fees by parents influences the experiences and decisions of students regarding staying in school?

Objective 3: To assess the effect of parents' follow-up of their children in schools and students' retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.

1. Question for Headteachers/Deputy Headteachers/Classteachers:

- In what ways do you think parents' follow-up on their children's academic performance and attendance affects students' decisions to remain enrolled?

2. Question for BOG/PTA Representatives:

- How important do you believe parental involvement and follow-up are in encouraging students to stay in school, particularly in times of academic difficulty?

3. Question for Student Leaders:

- How do you feel about the follow-up that your parents do regarding your schooling? Does it have any effect on your motivation to continue your studies?

Objective 4: To establish the relationship between parents' participation in school meetings and students' retention rate in USE schools in Amuru District.

1. Question for Headteachers/Deputy Headteachers/Classteachers:

- What role does parental participation in school meetings play in shaping student retention rates at your school?

2. Question for BOG/PTA Representatives:

- How does the involvement of parents in school governance and meetings influence their support for students' education and overall retention rates?

3. Question for Student Leaders:

- How does the participation of your parents in school meetings affect your engagement in school activities and your decision to remain in school?

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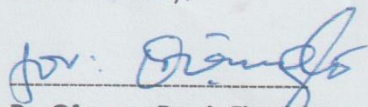
Thank you

Appendix F: Work Plan for Research Proposal

Table 3: Work plan

S/No	Activity/Month	Jan, 2024	Feb, 2024	Mar, 2024	Apr, 2024	May, 2024	Jun, 2024	Jul, 2024	Aug, 2024	Sep, 2024	Oct, 2024	Nov, 2024	Jul, 2025	Aug, 2025
1	Topic Selection, and approval													
2	Writing initial Proposal													
3	Submitting First Draft of Proposal													
4	Refine Draft and Submit final Proposal													
5	Proposal Defense													
6	Data Collection													
7	Data Entry and Analysis													
8	Writing Research Report													
9	Submission of Research Report													
10	Presentation of Research Report													
11	Refining and Submitting Final Research Report													

Appendix G: Introductory Letter

GULU P.O. BOX 166 GULU		UNIVERSITY TEL: +256471432922;
OFFICE OF THE DEAN, FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES		
October 15 th , 2024		
 TO : WHOM IT MAY CONCERN		
This is to recommend to you Ms. Amono Lilly (Reg No. 22/U/2015/MED/PS), a Bonifide student of Gulu University who has successfully completed her studies with Masters degree of Educational Management. While at campus, she was an obedient and hardworking student who never took her studies for granted. Currently she is now waiting for graduation thereafter she will obtain her academic transcript and certificate of studies. Any assistance rendered to her in relations to her career pursuit will be highly appreciated.		
Yours faithfully,  Dr. Ofoyuru Denis Thaddeus Dean, Faculty of Education and Humanities		GULU UNIVERSITY  15 OCT 2024  FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES