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Teacher Rewards and Learner Academic Performance in Private Secondary Schools in Arua City

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Abstract

Declining learner academic performance has been manifested in most private secondary schools in Arua City, and teachers are facilitators of learning who need to be rewarded, necessitating this study on teacher rewards and learner academic performance. Its objective was to examine the relationship between teacher reward and learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City. Informed by Abraham Maslow's theory, the study used a cross-sectional survey design and quantitative and qualitative methods on a sample of 156 respondents. The schools were clustered into rural and urban areas and stratified according to similar characteristics. Purposive sampling was used to select administrators and a random sample to appoint teachers. Quantitative data analysis employed descriptive statistics involving frequencies and percentages and inferential statistics using Pearson correlation, while qualitative research applied group data into themes. Based on the findings, it was clear that a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.6$) existed between teacher reward and learner academic performance. In particular, improvement in praises and gifts to teachers improved learner academic performance. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.445$. Significance of the correlation $p = 0.000$ that justifies the conclusion that teacher reward significantly explained learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City. Reward, especially low salaries and fringe benefits, limited financial performance bonuses advanced to teachers, accounted for decrease in learner academic performance by

36.0%. The study recommends supporting teacher reward initiatives in private secondary schools, especially regarding financial performance bonuses, salaries and fringe benefits that were not catered for to improve learner academic performance.

Keywords: *Teacher Reward, Learner Academic Performance*

1.0 Introduction

In Arua City, the performance of private secondary schools has been declining compared to that in giant public secondary schools. The study investigated the relationship between teacher reward and learner academic performance in order to ascertain the relationship between them. It examined teacher reward in form of financial performance bonuses, salary, praises, events outside school, gifts and learner academic performance measured by UCE results, learner participation, learner discipline, passion for learning and self-efficacy in Ordinary Level private secondary schools in Arua City since most of the private schools in Arua City are majorly O-level schools. Rewards need to be more pronounced and enough awareness needs to be created regarding them. Nwokeocha (2022), for teachers' passion to work hard to achieve good learner academic performance and quality education, emphasizes the need for continuous professional development, adequate motivation, and a supportive work environment. Despite these efforts, schools have generally performed poorly over the years, a subject of concern for many scholars. Yet Chika (2018) asserted that the productivity of teachers measured by their performance depends on their reward as a major factor in achieving the institutional goals inclusive of learner academic performance. This justified the need for this study.

1.1 Background to the study

Historically, more emphasis has been put on teacher reward and learner academic performance. Several studies explored the effect of reward on learning. Globally, Schmidhuber (2019) used rewards as task-defining inputs. In Gambia, Gundersen et al. (2019) investigated rewards in form of praise, and discovered that rewards in form of praise were less prevalent. In East Africa Peer et al. (2020) studied reward systems and its effect on teachers' job satisfaction, and concluded that reward systems need to be commensurate with effort an individual puts in the job. Emphasis was made on the role motivation tools like reward play in making workers put efforts to work (Edabu & Anumaka, 2014). In Uganda, Magyezi (2014) investigated rewards and job satisfaction, and discovered significant relationship between job satisfaction and monetary rewards like salaries.Aliwaru (2019) studied motivation elements like rewards on the performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Arua. The author recommended the introduction of more financial rewards for better learner academic performance.

As several scholars have studied teacher rewards in various contexts to date, teacher reward explains the willingness of teachers to work hard for better performance (Awase et al., 2003). The case of teacher reward and learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City was uncertain. Hence the researcher investigated to uncover circumstances underpinning teacher reward and its influence on learner academic performance

to inform school stakeholders and for better policy decisions. He specifically emphasized teacher rewards related to learner academic performance measured by UCE results, learner participation, learner discipline, passion for learning, and learning and self-efficacy.

Theoretically, Abraham Maslow proposed that unmet needs make individuals to focus exclusively on achieving such needs, whose accomplishment motivates them more than already achieved needs. Lower-level needs should be satisfied before higher-level needs are felt and pursued (Kendra, 2022). The theory highlighted the best methods schools can adopt to reward teachers for improved performance. Before teachers satisfy their higher-level esteem needs of achievement, competence, measured by learner academic performance, they must first fulfil their basic physiological needs. A hungry teacher who is not rewarded cannot achieve academic excellence. School administrators need to cater for teachers according to the proposition of Maslow. Unless the lower-level needs of teacher reward are attained, teachers may not strive for self-actualization needs of achievement such as learner academic performance.

Conceptually, teacher reward has been defined by several scholars. The adopted definition of teacher reward in this study is by Peer et al. (2020) who proclaimed that an organization's reward system needs to be commensurate to effort levels of individual teachers based on performance. Elock (2021) defined teacher reward in form of financial incentives that have been proven to motivate teachers for better learner academic performance. In this study, teacher reward was conceptualized as financial performance bonus, remuneration/salary, praises, events outside school, and gifts.

Learner academic performance is desirable for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 2030 agenda, goal 4, which calls for improving the quality of education through inclusive and equitable education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, for which teacher reward is essential (Bakar et al., 2022). According to Poro et al. (2019), ensuring that teachers have the required competences for effectiveness in the classroom is major in improving academic performance. According to the researcher, this could be achieved through teacher reward. In this study, learner academic performance has been conceptualized in terms of UCE results, learner participation, self-discipline, passion for learning, learner self-efficacy.

Contextually, the curiosity of the ministry of education is to witness teachers exhibit good performance demanding high level of loyalty, commitment from its teachers (National Teacher Policy, 2019). This is possible with teacher reward practices which are a means of achieving educational goals of enhancing learner academic performance and competence (National Teacher Policy, 2019). Similarly, Celestin (2022) recommended the need to have a process where teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic nature of reward influences their behaviour positively for high performance in schools. Yet learner academic performance remains low in private secondary schools in Arua City as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: UCE performance for schools in Arua City 2019 to 2020

	2019					2020				
School	**Div 1**	**Div2**	**Div3**	**Div4**	**Position**	**Div 1**	**Div 2**	**Div3**	**Div 4**	**Position**
St Joseph's College Ombaci	41	42	5	3	94	67	50	4	1	86
St Peter and Paul Pokea	4	9	4	-	177	8	10	4	-	170
St. Mary's Ediofe	28	83	34	3	206	31	99	33	2	178
Cornerstone	13	28	13	3	213	-	-	-	-	-

Source: UNEB Portal, (2018)

The low performance could be attributed to teacher reward; however, it is uncertain whether research has been done recently on the matter. Hence the researcher investigated by studying teacher reward in form of financial performance bonus, salaries, praises, events outside school and gifts in order to expose issues surrounding teacher reward and its influence on learner academic performance for redress in private secondary schools in Arua City.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Ideally, teachers are considered facilitators of learning whose competence needs to be developed by rewards among other factors (Nwokeocha, 2022). There is need for teacher reward for competence and better performance (Byaruhanga, 2018). In line with this, the government of Uganda in an attempt to achieve its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of ensuring quality education, has implemented several strategies in schools including: enhancement of teachers' salary, supplementing scholastic materials, infrastructure, training teachers for 21st Century skills, standardizing education policies like upgrading teacher qualification to a minimum of degree level (National Teacher Policy, 2019), improving teacher reward, standard of education and learner academic performance.

Actually, despite all these efforts, learner academic performance continued to decline in Arua City, indicated in Table 1. The low performance could be related to teacher reward or other factors. This was a matter of concern that, if left unattended to, might continue to affect learners' progress to A-level and higher institutions of learning. This therefore necessitated carrying out this study on teacher rewards and learner academic performance in Arua City to expose the gaps in this context early enough for redress before the situation worsens.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between teacher reward and learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City.

1.4 Scope of the study

Content-wise, this research investigated relationship between teacher rewards believed to have influence on learner academic performance measured by UCE results, learner participation, learner discipline, passion for learning, learner self-efficacy as dependent variables, believed to be key elements that influence learner academic performance. Geographically, the study

was conducted in Ordinary Level private secondary schools in Arua City, specifically Manibe Public, 'All' Saints Ociba, Oluko Secondary, Aliba, Cornerstone, Arua Islamic, Standard College Arua, Nile High Arua, showing low academic performance in UCE for private secondary schools indicated in Table 1. Time-wise**,** the research considered the period between 2018 and 2021 with persistent decline in learner academic performance in UCE.

1.5 Significance of the study

This research exposed weaknesses and strengths in teacher reward systems in private secondary schools in Arua City for school stakeholders and policy makers to improve on in their practices. Confirmed theories that explained teachers' behaviour in terms of reward factors that induce teachers to be productive in improving performance, added on the knowledge of teacher reward and learner academic performance advanced by other scholars.

1.6 Justification of the study

There has been persistent low academic performance of private secondary schools in Arua City evidenced by UCE results from 2018 to 2020; which might affect learner progress to higher institutions. Yet there has been no evidence of a similar study to address these problems. This justified the need for this study to enlighten on teacher rewards and learner academic performance; and the findings might be used to address the problems identified during the study for better learner academic performance in Arua City and elsewhere.

2.0 Literature Review

Margolang et al. (2019) examined correlation between reward and student learning. Applying the quantitative approach on a sample of 115 students, simple random sampling, employing product moment correlation technique showed a positive significant correlation between reward and student learning. The findings correspond to Oboko (2020) who studied teacher rewards and commitment to primary schools in Kabooge sub county, Nakasongola district in Uganda, using descriptive correlational design, and sample size of 112 teachers. He showed that rewarding workers improved performance with $r = 0.900$, $p = 0.000$. He suggested handling teacher reward before student performance worsened. This was unlike Rwothumio et al. (2020) who examined the role of financial rewards in enhancing academic staff performance in private universities in Uganda, employing a mixed design, convergent parallel approach for data analysis, from a sample of 299 academic staff. Results indicated a weak positive relationship between financial reward and teaching output like students' performance in public universities where ($r= 0.282$, $p = 0.01$).

From the differences in findings, research design, etc. exposed by the literature review, the researcher studied teacher rewards in form of financial performance bonus, salaries, praises, events outside school gifts related to learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City. He employed cross-sectional research design, quantitative and qualitative approaches on a sample of 156 respondents to determine issues concerning rewards and performance in private secondary schools in Arua City.

Financial reward is very vital to appreciate efforts of employees for performance (Rwothumio et al., 2020). Resulting from this assertion, Jiban (2021) contended that rewards encourage productivity and efficiency in an organization. He examined perception of rewards by teachers in Napali and looked forward to performance-based rewards like financial performance bonuses. The findings of Jiban (2021) were similar to those of Eren (2019) who investigated the effects of performance pay elements in schools using administrative data that revealed teachers might have improved their teaching strategies with implementation of performance-based compensation like financial performance bonus. Accordingly, from the variations in sample size, methods of data collection, different locations, the researcher carried out this study on teacher rewards in form of financial performance bonuses to bridge these gaps, and confirm the results.

Asaari et al. (2019) posits that reward is vital for employees to achieve goals. He examined reward by salaries among other elements related to performance, using self-administered questionnaire. He concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between rewards and performance. These findings were in line with Kaamaruddin et al. (2023) who investigated the effects of salaries on teacher performance employing quantitative research approach, questionnaires in Della Strada, North Jakarta, that showed salary had positive significant relationship on teacher productivity. Much as Asaari et al. (2019) and Kaamaruddin et al. (2023) had similar findings, it cannot be generalized to the case of teacher rewards in form of salaries in Arua City, which necessitated this study to prove their findings and add on to the body of knowledge related to rewards and learner performance.

In their study where they used cross-sectional descriptive design, Nduhura et al. (2022), examined relationship between financial and non-financial rewards inclusive of praises on performance from 10 schools using interview and documentary review for data collection. The findings indicated a significant and positive relationship between financial rewards and performance ($r = 0.692$) non-financial rewards such as praises having significant and positive relationship with performance where ($r = 0.616$) significance level of 0.000. In a different opinion Moore et al., (2019) reviewed evidence to support praise in schools. The findings showed insufficient evidence to support teacher praise as being recognized in schools. This therefore exposed gaps in the concept of teacher rewards in form of praises and learner academic performance. The researcher investigated on a target population of teachers and administrators based on the recommendation of Moore et al. (2019) to have further research on praises for rewards and its influence on learner academic performance.

Misaki *(*2020) affirmed that the success of any organization was significantly based on the ability to achieve its strategic objective, through non-financial rewards such as organizing events outside school for teachers like wedding parties, an intrinsic reward for better performance. But most organizations focused on extrinsic rewards such as money that mostly does not energize for better performance. Unlike Misaki *(*2020), Siddiqui et al. (2019) in a study on less privileged pupils in England, showed they had lower levels of achievement than their counterparts for not being exposed to wider learning experiences outside classroom learning. It is not clear whose views are correct regarding rewards in form of organizing events outside school that the researcher investigated to build on the case in private secondary schools.

It has been discovered that gifts of any value can create a long-time relationship where an employee becomes loyal to the giver (Guide on managing gifts in the Public Service, 2019). On the other hand, Behaviorism theory in proposing reward among other factors for the success of learning, discovered theoretically rewards increased interest to learn. This is similar to the findings of a research by Sidin (2021) that indicated that if rewards are applied carefully, they have positive effects on performance. This is just like the findings of Margolang et al. (2019), who examined the correlation between reward and students' learning using quantitative method whose results indicate a significant correlation between reward and students' learning. Their views have been similar on teacher reward. Therefore, the researcher found it mandatory to prove their findings on teacher reward in form of gifts related to learner academic performance.

2.1 Learner Academic performance

Agenda 4 of the Sustainable development goals 2030 calls for improving the quality of education including all categories of learners for equality and opportunities for lifelong learning, achieved through improved learner academic performance for which teacher reward is essential (Bakar et al., 2022). Despite the assertion by Bakar et al. (2022), Wara, (2018) affirmed that low performance was not attributed to urban schools alone but was worldwide. Therefore, there was need to review literature on academic performance. Because of the differences in the opinions of Bakar et al. (2022) and Wara (2018), it was not known whose view was correct regarding teacher reward and learner academic performance. This necessitated this study on teacher reward and learner academic performance in terms of UCE results, learner participation, self-discipline, passion for learning, learner self-efficacy to prove their findings.

Promoting effective learning and academic success in today's complicated world is a topic of concern in education (Akpur, 2021). This assertion relates to the National Teacher Policy (2019) that raising the quality of teachers improves performance. However, some of the important teacher quality aspects cannot be captured by indicators like reward, among others. This concurs with Akankwasa, (2018) that the qualities of an effective teacher affect learning outcomes shown by students' academic performance. To verify the above research findings and fill the knowledge gaps in teacher reward and learner academic performance, it was mandatory to carry out this study on learner academic performance measured by UCE performance.

Class participation has also attracted much attention as one of the essential elements for the successful conduct of a learning activity (Akpur, 2021). This view concurs with the findings of a study on vulnerable learners in England that revealed after an opportunity to participate in outside school activities that there was slight progress in pupils' reading and mathematics performance (Siddiqui et al., 2019). This result by Akpur (2021) and Siddiqui et al. (2019) differs from a study by Akankwasa (2018) in Uganda whose findings showed teachers having greater impact on students' academic performance and lifelong success. This difference in findings on learner academic performance necessitated this study emphasizing learner participation as an indicator of academic performance.

Tohir et al. (2022) investigated learning interest and discipline on learning and established that good learning outcomes can be achieved through several factors which include discipline. This finding was similar to the findings of Kennedy and Hesbon, (2021) who contend that the level of learner self-discipline is necessary for the attainment of academic performance in schools. But the findings of Tohir et al. (2022), Kennedy and Hesbon (2021), which are similar, differ from that of Kumar et al., (2019) who investigated the relationship between achievement motivation and academic achievement in English among high school students and the results suggested that achievement goals were key drivers of academic performance. Because of the gaps in the findings from the literature review, the researcher investigated learner academic performance in terms of learner self-discipline to bridge the gap.

A research which examined passion for learning in high school students in Saudi Arabia shows passion for learning was high among high school students in studying new curricula (Najmuldeen, 2021). This was similar to the findings that revealed passion in learning and discipline had a positive influence on learning academic performance (Tohir et al., 2022). On the contrary, according to Hu and Moreno-murcia (2020), passion did not show any significant indirect effect on learner performance. Though Najmuldeen (2021) While Tohir and Tohir (2022) held similar views, they carried out their studies in different periods. Changes in demography and policies could have altered the results, necessitating this study on learner academic performance measured by passion for learning in 2024.

3.0 Methodology

Using mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative approaches for clear interpretation, in-depth investigation and triangulation purposes, the study obtained data that complemented the research topic for better understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2002). Descriptive cross-sectional survey design used picked representative sample across the study population to record exposure to many experiences within a short period of time (Amin, 2005). The study population comprised 200 teachers, 24 administrative staff (224 in all) who were knowledgeable about the variables under investigation for reliable data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The sample size was 156 using Krejcier and Morgan (1970) relevant group about which generalization was drawn with credible information (Amin, 2005). Purposive sampling was used to select administrative staff knowledgeable to achieve the objectives of the study (Campell, 2010). Teachers were randomly selected without bias for the credibility of the results (Shaheen et al., 2019). Questionnaires and interviews were varied for methodological triangulation (Amin, 2005). To determine the validity of the instruments, the researcher calculated content validity index of the questionnaires to be 0.8, compared to standard measure by Amin at 0.7 to 1, for valid data.

Internal consistency reliability was done for stable items by piloting the instruments in St Joseph's College Ombaci. Analyzed data was subjected to a reliability test (Cronbach alpha) using SPSS for items where the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the variables exceeded 0.7, making the items reliable as recommended by Amin (2005). Descriptive statistics was used to analyse quantitative data involving frequencies and percentages to determine scores;

then a range was found for easy analysis (Ganyaupfu, 2014). Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the strength, direction of the relationship and tested the hypothesis (Phil et al., 2022). Qualitative data from interviews was analysed thematically to elaborate on quantitative data (Eyssi, 2016).

4.0 Results

Response rate was used to mean number of people who started and completed responding to this research divided by the number of people who constituted the total sample (Sulliva, 2023). In this particular research, the sample size consisted of 156 respondents although the study attained a response rate of about 97.4% above 67% recommended to be representative of the population (Amin, 2005).

4.1 Demographic results

To understand how representative the sample was to the broader population (Warren, 2021), the researcher obtained relevant background information on gender of respondents, experience in the same school, level of education, and the responses indicated in Tables 2, 3, 4. The results on gender of respondents are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Shows findings on respondents according to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Males	98	74.2
Females	34	25.8
Total	**132**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data, (2023)

Table 2 shows demographic information related to respondents' gender, revealing that most respondents were males 98 (74.2%) while females were 34 (25.8%). This implies the participation of both males and females in generating the study's findings, though females were fewer. The results on respondents' experience level are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Showing results on the level of experience of respondents

Period of time in the same school	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	81	61.4
5-10 years	32	24.2
11-15 years	10	7.6
15-20 years	4	3.0
Over 20 years	5	3.8
Total	**132**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data, (2023)

Table 3 indicates that a greater percentage of the respondents 81(61.4%) ha working experience of less than 5 years in the same school, whereas 32(24.2%) had worked for 5-10 years. Ten (7.6%) had worked for 11-15 years, 4 (3.0%) had worked for 15-20 years and 5 (3.8%) had

worked for over 20 years in the same school. This implied that a greater majority of 81 (61.4%) were relatively new in the same school; they had new ideas for innovation and creativity, and were easily motivated for better performance. The results on level of education of respondents are as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Results on Respondents' level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary level	1	0.8
Diploma holder	100	75.8
Bachelor's Degree	27	20.5
Master's level	3	2.3
PhD level	1	0.8
Total	**132**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data (2023)

Table 4 shows that a greater percentage of the respondents (teachers) 100 (75.8%) in the private schools were diploma holders, 27 (20.5%) were degree holders, 3(2.3%) were Master's holders, 1 (0.8 %) was a PhD holder, and 1 (0.8%) was a secondary school leaver. This implied that a greater majority were learned and could give credible information for this study.

4.2 Descriptive statistics results on learner academic performance

Responses were drawn on 10 items about learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City by showing agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert scale in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics results for learner Academic Performance

Learner Academic Performance	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**TOTAL**
In UCE performance ranking my school is always in the national grid	31 (23.5%)	20 (15.2%)	15 (11.4%)	36 (27.3%)	30 (22.7%)	132 (100%)
In this school usually over 40% of the candidates are in grade one, 50% in division two, the rest in the remaining grades	27 (20.5%)	53 (40.2%)	26 (19.7%)	17 (12.9%)	9 (6.8%)	132 (100%)
In my school learners actively participate in class during lesson times.	3 (2.3%)	7 (5.3%)	12 (9.1%)	74 (56.1%)	36 (27.3%)	132 (100%)
I have always been impressed by my learner's willingness to attend to preparations for exams, personal revision and research.	4 (3.0%)	14 (10.6%)	24 (18.2%)	66 (50.0%)	24 (18.2%)	132 (100%)
In my school learners are self-disciplined time conscious, obey school rules and regulations.	4 (3.0%	17 (12.9%)	23 (17.4%)	51 (38.6%)	37 (28.0%)	132 (100%)
On average, over ninety percent of my learners attend lessons daily.	5 (3.8%)	13 (9.8%)	16 (12.1%)	68 (51.5%)	30 (22.7%)	132 (100%)
Continuous assessments, seminars are scheduled regularly, learners are willingly to attend.	4 ((3.0%)	28 (21.2%)	26 (19.7%)	50 (37.9%)	24 (18.2%	132 (100%)

Learner Academic Performance	SD	D	N	A	SA	TOTAL
In this school all learners willingly, have access to the library and the computer laboratory for research.	11 (8.3%)	22 (16.7%)	23 (17.4%)	53 (40.2%)	23 (17.4%)	132 (100%)
Learner self-efficacy in following missed lessons is high.	7 (5.3%)	24 (18.2%)	22 (16.7%)	46 (34.8%)	33 (25.0%)	132 (100%)
Most learners are confident in all school activities,	13 (9.8%)	28 (21.2%)	20 (15.2%	49 (37.1%)	22 (16.7%)	132 (100%)

Source: Field Data, (2023)

All the teachers whose views strongly disagreed and disagreed to the items were grouped in a category of teachers that "objected" to the items. Strongly agreed and agreed were grouped as teachers who "Consented" to the items. The third group was for teachers who remained neutral. The interpretation of the results was done by comparing the three groups after computation of the results as follows:

Table 5 revealed that most teachers consented to 8 items (3 – 10) concerning learner academic performance as opposed to those who objected and or were neutral cases. Most of them objected to items I and 2. The percentage of those who objected to item one (1) was 51%, neutral cases were 15%, totalling to 66%. Those who consented were 63%, lower than total of objection and neutral cases. Those who objected to item two (2) were 80%, neutral cases 26%, consented to the item were 26%, making the total of those who objected much higher than those who consented and were neutral. Most of the teachers consented to (8) items on learner academic performance than the neutral cases and objection cases. Equating it to a range indicates that teachers who objected ranged between 10% and 42% a low range; neutral cases ranged between 12% to 24% a low range; consented cases ranged between 71 % and 110%, a higher range compared to objection and neutral cases. Regarding this analysis, the following interpretation was drawn:

Findings portrayed that learners actively participated in class during lesson times; learners' willingness to attend to preparations for exams, personal revision, and research was high; learners were self-disciplined, time-conscious, and obeyed school rules and regulations. Over ninety percent of the learners attended lessons daily. Continuous assessments, seminars were scheduled regularly; learners willingly accessed the library and the computer laboratory for research; learner self-efficacy was high. Most learners were confident in all school activities.

Based on the interpretation of the findings, most teachers did not agree to the view in UCE performance rankings of their schools on the national grid. Over 40% of the candidates were in grade one, 50% in grade two, and the rest in the remaining grades, revealing low Learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City.

Interview results emphasized more the nature of learner academic performance. For example, with UCE results, factors such as learner participation, willingness to engage in school activities, a high level of self-discipline, consistent lesson attendance, access to educational facilities, self-efficacy, and the ability to self-evaluate with confidence play a crucial role in academic performance. Category A respondent from school five said,

"Learners fairly observe school rules, though some still do not turn early for lessons, on average the discipline is fair simply because they realized that the COVID 19 era exposed them to various issues that continued to school. The school has empowered the disciplinary committee not to tolerate any indiscipline cases, that is why there is improvement. Over 90% do attend daily, lower secondary curriculum demands are full of tasks and activities in every lesson, there is daily assessment of learners, learners borrow and return books from the library" (Interview with category A respondent from school five 13th April, 2023).

Category A respondent from school five confirmed, *"UCE performance ranking in this school has been fair, less than 50% pass in grade one to three"* (Interview with respondent category A, school five 13th April, 2023).

Thus, interview results concluded that learners performed poorly in UCE in private secondary schools in Arua City. However, learners participated actively in school activities, and learner discipline and passion for learning were fair, which matched descriptive statistical results.

4.3 Descriptive statistics result on teacher reward

Teachers' responses were drawn to ten items explaining teacher reward by indicating their agreement/disagreement on a five-point Likert scale as shown in Table 6. The analysis and interpretation of the findings follow the findings presented in the Table.

Table 12: Descriptive statistics results on teacher reward

Teacher Reward	SD	D	N	A	SA	TOTAL
In my school, a teacher whose candidates perform well is given financial bonus	33 (25.0%)	29 (22.0%)	21 (15.9%)	27 (20.5%)	22 (16.7%)	132 (100%)
Consistent, timely performance bonus was offered for teacher motivation.	21 (15.9%)	35 (26.5%)	19 (14.4%)	41 (31.1%)	16 (12.1%)	132 (100%)
salary paid to measure with work done, experience, education level that motivated teachers.	22 (16.7%)	32 (24.2%)	21 (15.9%)	26 (19.7%0	31 23.5%	132 (100%)
The basic salary provided is guaranteed	14 (10.6%)	16 12.1%)	37 (28.0%0	41 (31.1%)	24 (18.2%)	132 (100%)
In this school teachers are praised in public/meetings/assemblies for their success and is celebrated.	11 (8.3%)	18 (13.6%)	25 (18.9%0	53 40.2%	25 18.9%	132 (100%)
The school recognized good performance by praising regularly.	14 (10.6%)	29 (22.0%)	14 (10.6%)	50 (37.9%)	25 (18.9%)	132 (100%)
The school organizes events outside school for teachers inform of birth day partied, graduations, weddings etc.	35 (26.5%)	43 (32.6%)	28 (21.2%)	16 (12.1%)	10 (7.6%)	132 (100%)

Teacher Reward	SD	D	N	A	SA	TO-TAL
Simple staff activities like staff games are organized to build relationship and feeling of appreciation	16 12.1%)	24 (18.2%)	20 (15.2%)	48 (36.4%)	24 (18.2%)	132 (100%)
The management often gives their time, knowledge and is available for teachers when need arises	6 (4.5%)	12 (9.1%)	16 (12.1%)	82 (62.1%)	16 (12.1%)	132 (100%)
The administration often considers giving gifts in kind and in any form on occasions deemed necessary	9 (6.8%)	22 (16.7%)	33 (25.0%)	50 (37.9%)	18 (13.6%)	132 (100%)

Source: Field Data, (2023)

Table 6 revealed that a greater percentage of teachers consented to 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 than teachers who objected or were neutral. The percentage of teachers who objected was from 18% to 29%, that was lower; neutral ones ranged between 14% and 25%; those that consented to the items rose from 68% to 98% which was a much higher range than objection and neutral cases. Based on these comparisons, it is clear that the percentages of those that objected or were neutral were slightly lower than those that consented to the items. The majority objected to items 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 compared to those who consented. The range of those who objected to these items was 30% to 78%. Neutral cases ranged from 19% to 37%, and those who consented ranged from 26% to 65%. Interpretation of findings portrays that a greater percentage of teachers did not consent to the fact that consistent, timely performance bonus was offered for teacher motivation and learner academic performance. In their school, the salary paid was measured by work done, experience, and education level. The basic wage provided was guaranteed. The school organized events outside the school for teachers, such as birthday parties, graduations, weddings, etc.

Most of the teachers consented to the view that in their school, Teachers were praised regularly and success celebrated publicly. Simple staff activities like staff games were organized to build relationships and feelings of appreciation. The management often gave their time and knowledge, and they were available for teachers when the need arose. The administration often considered giving gifts in kind and any form on occasions deemed necessary for teacher reward.

Interview results from knowledgeable respondents supported the findings from questionnaires and highlighted the results of teacher rewards -- for example, giving financial performance bonuses, salaries paid to teachers, organizing events outside school, and praise. Category B respondent from school six revealed,

> *"There is provision for meagre financial performance bonus for teachers whose candidates score from distinction one to credit five, not offered consistently and timely" (Interview with category B respondent from school six11 April, 2023).*

Category C respondent from school C said,

> *"The salary paid to teachers is meager, we struggle to pay it, we do not organize*

events outside school for teachers like weddings, birth day parties and many more" (Interview with school one respondent category C, 18th April, 2023).

Thus, the findings from questionnaires and interviews on teacher reward confirmed that financial performance bonus, salaries and organizing events outside school were inconsistent and inadequate. Praises, simple staff activities, gifts were provided for better learner academic performance.

4.4 Teacher reward and learner academic performance

The hypothesis, "There is a significant relationship between teacher reward and learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City," was tested. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) and the coefficient of determination (R2) were used to determine the level of variation in learner academic performance caused by reward. The results of testing the hypothesis are shown in **Table 7.**

Table 7: Showing Correlation coefficient and coefficient of determination results of Teacher reward

	Teacher Reward
Learner Academic Performance	r = 0.6 R^2= 0.360 P = 0.000 N = 132 Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

Source: Field data (2023)

Table 7 portrays a strong positive correlation (r = 0.6) between teacher reward and learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.360) was computed and expressed as a percentage to determine the variance in learner academic performance due to teacher reward. Findings showed that teacher reward explains the variance in learner academic performance by 36.0%. Subjecting the finding to a significance test (p) indicated significance of the correlation (p = 0.000), which was less than the recommended critical level at 0.05, making the results to be accepted with confidence. The hypothesis, "There is a significant relationship between teacher reward and learner academic performance in Arua City" was accepted.

5.0 Discussion

The findings and assessment of the relationship between teacher reward and learner academic performance revealed Pearson correlation coefficient r = 0.6, indicating a strong positive correlation between teacher reward and learner academic performance. The significance of correlation p = 0.000, making the results acceptable with confidence. It explained the variance in learner academic performance by 36.0%. The results concurred with Margolang et al. (2019), Oboko (2020) and Sidin (2021). Margolang et al. (2019) examined the correlation between reward and student learning by applying a quantitative approach to a sample of 115 students, using simple random sampling and product-moment correlation, whose results showed a positive significant correlation between reward and student learning. This was similar to the

findings of research by Sidin (2021) that indicated that if rewards were applied carefully, they would have positive effects on performance. The results of this study built on the knowledge of teacher reward and learner academic performance advanced by the previous scholars and confirmed Maslow's theory that unless lower-level needs like reward are met, teachers cannot strive for self-actualization needs like achievement in learner academic performance. Therefore, this supported a call for all school stakeholders to consider rewarding teachers for better learner academic performance.

On the other hand, these results disagreed with Rwothumio et al. (2020) who examined the role of financial rewards in enhancing academic staff performance in private universities in Uganda. He employed a mixed design, convergent parallel approach for data analysis from a sample of 299 academic staff, directors, and vice-chancellors. The results indicated a weak positive relationship between financial reward and students' performance in public universities where ($r= 0.282$, $p = 0.01$). The variations in the results with Rwothumio et al. (2020) might have resulted from differences in research design and methods of data collection that still warrant a conclusion teacher reward had a positive and significant relationship with learner academic performance in Private secondary schools in Arua City.

Descriptive statistics and interview findings indicated that most private school teachers agreed that the school recognized good performance by praising teachers regularly. Simple staff activities like games were organized for teacher rewards. The management often gave their time and knowledge, and they were available for teachers when needed. The administration often considered giving gifts in kind and in any form on occasions deemed necessary for better learner academic performance.

The findings concurred with Nduhura et al. (2022) in their study, which, using cross-sectional descriptive design, examined the relationship between financial and non-financial rewards inclusive of praises on teacher motivation and performance from 10 schools using interviews and documentary reviews for data collection. The findings indicated a significant and positive relationship between financial reward and performance ($r = 0.692$) with a significance level of 0. 000. Non-financial rewards such as praises had a significant and positive relationship with performance where ($r = 0.616$) with a significance level of 0.000. It has been discovered that gifts of any value can create a long-time relationship where an employee becomes loyal to the giver (Guide on managing gifts in the Public Service, 2019).These findings justified the concept that intrinsic rewards like praises and gifts have significant effects in improving performance that school stakeholders and policy makers need to consider greatly.

The results disagreed with the findings of Moore et al., (2019) who reviewed evidence to support praise in schools. The findings showed insufficient evidence to support teacher praise as being recognized in schools. The deviation in results could have been as a result of gaps in study population. Therefore, the conclusion that private secondary schools in Arua City catered for reward in form of praises and gifts to improve learner academic performance was drawn.

Descriptive statistics findings on the other hand exposed teacher rewards in form of financial performance bonus were not adequate, they were inconsistent and untimely; salary paid to teachers was not according to the job description, experience and teacher demands, the basic salary provided was not guaranteed. The schools in most cases did not organize events outside school for teachers in form of birthday parties, graduations, weddings.

The results disagreed with Rwothumio et al. (2020), Jiban (2021), Eren (2019) Kaamaruddin et al. (2023). Rwothumio et al. (2020) discovered that financial reward was very vital to appreciate efforts of employees which finally determines performance. Eren (2019) investigated effects of performance pay elements in schools. He used administrative data which revealed that teachers might have improved their teaching strategies with implementation of performance-based compensation such as financial performance bonus. Kaamaruddin et al. (2023) investigated the effects of salaries on teacher productivity employing quantitative research approach, questionnaires to collect data in Della Strada, North Jakarta, which showed that salary had positive significant relationship on teacher productivity and performance. The disagreement in the results with the previous scholars could have been as a result of differences in milieu, study design, methodology, study population etc. Therefore, the conclusion: teacher reward in form of financial performance bonus, salary, organizing events outside school was not considered for teacher reward and learner academic performance was drawn. This might have contributed to a decline in learner academic performance.

6.0 Conclusion

Based on the discussions of the findings in ascertaining the influence of teacher rewards on learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City, the provision of financial performance bonuses and salaries for teacher rewards was inadequate, inconsistent, and untimely, which might have contributed to the low learner academic performance. If the school stakeholders and policymakers could consider prioritizing these aspects in their decisions alongside intrinsic rewards of praises and gifts, it might greatly improve learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City, as advanced by some scholars in the literature.

6.1 Recommendations

From the discussions of the findings and conclusions, the study recommended that policymakers and school stakeholders in private secondary schools consistently and timely provide teacher rewards in the form of financial performance bonuses. Pay salaries according to work done, experience, and education levels. Apart from using the traditional salary scales that are paid without any conditions, private secondary schools in Arua City have introduced performance-based incentives to enhance learners' academic performance.

6.2 Contribution of the study

The results have exposed weaknesses in teacher reward systems related to learner academic performance for further consideration by policymakers and school stakeholders in Arua City, incredibly inadequate, untimely, and inconsistent salaries and financial performance bonuses.

It has exposed aspects of teacher reward that policymakers must prioritize, especially intrinsic rewards such as praise and gifts that account much for teacher reward and learner academic performance. The findings added to the knowledge on teacher reward and learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City as advanced by other scholars, which can equally be generalized to public secondary schools in Arua City.

6.3 The Limitations and future research areas

The study focused on teacher reward and learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City with limited aspects of reward. Its findings can only be used to conclude public secondary schools in Arua City. This leaves out Tertiary institutions and other regions in the country that were not catered for by this research. This research investigated teacher reward and learner academic performance in private secondary schools in Arua City. There is a need for further study to include other reward elements apart from the ones studied for performance. The study was limited to private secondary schools whose findings could not be generalized to higher learning institutions. Conclusions of the background information revealed that the majority of the teachers in private schools in Arua City were diploma holders, which could have impacted learner academic performance, necessitating further study in education level/ qualifications of teachers to performance.

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