

School Culture and Students' Academic Performance in Private Secondary Schools in Jinja City, Southern Division, Uganda

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Abstract

The main purpose of the study is to examine the influence of school culture on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division. The following specific objectives will guide the study; i) To establish the influence of teacher commitment on students' academic performance, ii) To determine the influence of team work on students' academic performance, and iii) To assess the influence of time management on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design based on a quantitative approach. Simple linear regression analysis was engaged to assess the influence of school culture on students' academic performance in order to provide empirical evidence on study hypotheses at a 5% significance level. The study revealed that teacher commitment has a significantly strong and positive influence on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division ($\beta=0.645$, $P\text{-value}=0.000$). Additionally, the study revealed that team work has a significantly strong and positive influence on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division ($\beta=0.604$, $P\text{-value}=0.000$). The study further revealed that time management has a significantly weak and positive influence on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division ($\beta=0.340$, $P\text{-value}=0.001$) at a 5% significance level. In conclusion, school culture outstandingly influences students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division in that an improvement in teacher commitment, team work, and time management resultantly would lead to improved students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division. The researcher recommends that teachers and the school administration should promote a positive learning environment through fostering mutual respect, inclusivity, and belonging for all students as this would directly and significantly influence students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Keywords: School Culture, Teacher Commitment, Team Work, Time Management, Students' Academic Performance, and Private Secondary Schools.

Introduction

This study aims at examining the influence of school culture on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Historical Perspective

Globally, school culture is seen as a serious factor in addressing educational disparities and improving

outcomes for disregarded students like academic performance. Studies in countries like Singapore, Finland, and South Korea validate that collaborative, supportive, and respectful school culture and environment donate to higher students' academic performance (Santia, Astuti & Syafitri, 2024). In the late 20th Century, UNESCO and United Nations endorsed education as a human right, encouraging

governments to form inclusive and safe school climates so as to enhance learning outcomes such as students' academic performance. The notion of school culture extended past discipline to embrace teacher support, emotional well-being, student engagement, and peer relationships, and these were positively related with higher academic performance among students worldwide (Bayar & Alkan, 2021).

Theoretical Perspective

The study was steered by the Ecological Systems Theory established by Bronfenbrenner in 1979. The theory underscores that student development is influenced by multiple nested systems, from the instant school setting (microsystem) to wider social factors (macrosystem). School culture is a microsystem directly influencing the child, while also interacting with family and community contexts (mesosystem). The school culture includes interactions with peers, teachers, and other staff members, directly affecting students' academic performance and motivation (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). In the education context, according to Maalouf and Zaatari (2022) the theory speculates that student relations with school and family affects performance, as shared values and supportive communication boost learning outcomes. The authors also assert that a positive, inclusive school culture interacts synergistically with supportive family and community environments to significantly improve students' academic performance and achievement (Maalouf & Zaatari, 2022). The theory was applicable as it affords an association between school culture and students' academic performance as school culture significantly impacts students' academic performance outcomes.

Contextual Perspective

This study was undertaken in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division examining the influence of school culture on students' academic performance. This case study was considered due to the limited studies that have been undertaken in the area related to school culture and students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City. Additionally, Jinja City was taken into account because of the augmented poor students' academic

performance designated by a deterioration in students' performance in Universal Certificate of Education exams from 79.4% in 2019 to 71.8% in 2021 of students who passed in Division I and Division II in private secondary schools in the city (Jinja District Local Government, 2022).

Conceptual Perspective

School culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, norms, traditions, and patterns of behavior that shape how people in a school think, feel, and act. It encompasses the "personality" of a school in terms of the shared way of thinking, acting, and relating that shapes the learning environment and influences what students achieve (Bayar & Alkan, 2021). Conversely, students' academic performance refers to the extent to which a learner has achieved specific educational goals, as measured through various indicators such as grades, standardized test scores, completion rates, and mastery of curriculum content (Afemikhe, Imasuen & Idusogie, 2022). For this study, school culture was measured in terms of teacher commitment, team work, and time management, while students' academic performance was measured in terms of completion of assignments, grades and test scores, class participation, subject proficiency, communication skills, as well as critical thinking and problem-solving abilities among others.

Statement of the problem

The government of Uganda has undertaken several initiatives aimed at enhancing students' academic performance by enhancing and strengthening the school culture/climate. These initiatives concentrate on generating a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment, identifying its crucial role in enlightening students' academic performance and general learning outcomes. For instance, the Ministry of Education and Sports has developed a set of guiding principles to aid schools appraise and enhance the quality of students' academic performance and learning outcomes which also emphasize creating student-centered environments and encouraging positive behavior among students, all of which subsidize to a conducive school culture/climate (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2017).

However, despite all notable efforts and initiatives, students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City is still grappling branded with a deterioration in students' final examination grades, amplified students' absenteeism rates, and limited students' participation in classroom activities (Jinja District Local Government, 2022). Evidence indicates a deterioration in students' performance in Universal Certificate of Education exams from 79.4% in 2019 to 71.8% in 2021 of students who passed in Division I and Division II in private secondary schools in the city (Jinja District Local Government, 2022). Consequently, this has resulted into high student dropouts, reduced career opportunities, and increased student employment challenges as a product of poor performance. Therefore, it is upon this supporting evidence that this study examined the influence of school culture on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The general objective of the study is to examine the influence of school culture on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Specific Objectives

- i. To establish the influence of teacher commitment on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.
- ii. To determine the influence of team work on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.
- iii. To assess the influence of time management on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Study Hypotheses

The study also was guided by these various alternative hypotheses;

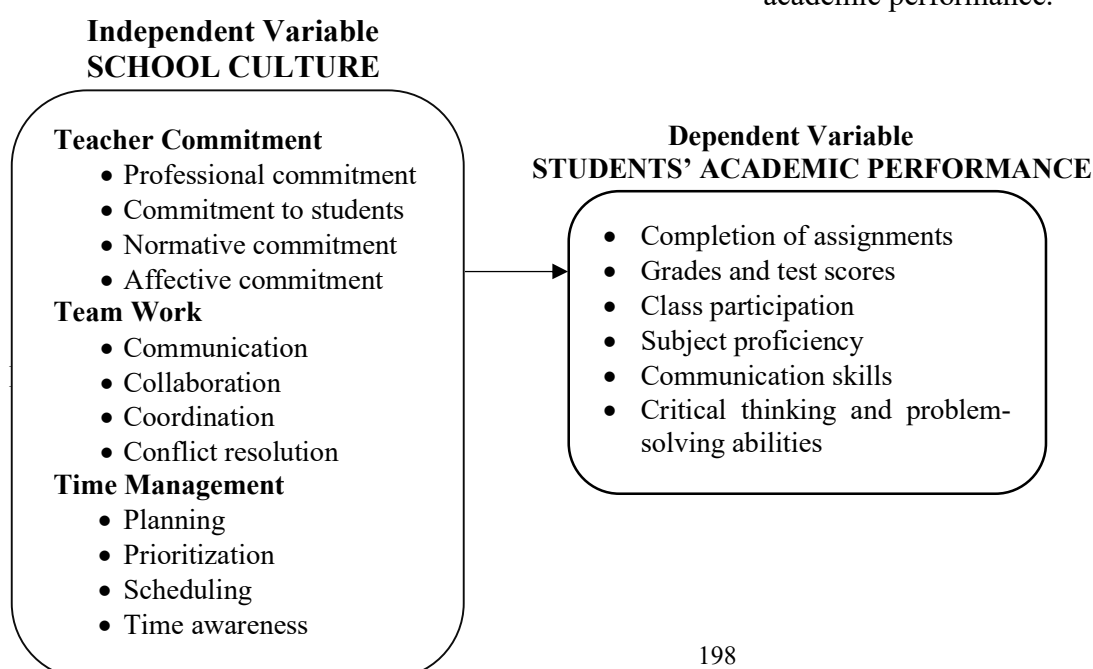
Ha1: Teacher commitment significantly influences students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Ha2: Team work significantly influences students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Ha3: Time management significantly influences students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework provides an illustration on the linkage between school culture and students' academic performance.



School Culture and Students' Academic Performance

School culture is essentially the shared values, norms, beliefs, and behavioral expectations within a school community. It operates as the hidden operating system that guides teaching practices, relationships, discipline, and the way learning is valued. When school culture is positive (collaborative, inclusive, achievement-oriented), it sets up the conditions for learning to flourish, improving students' academic performance. However, when school culture is negative with low expectations, fragmented relationships, and inequitable practices, it can limit even the best curriculum or resources which negatively impacts students' academic performance (Jhoselle, 2020). According to Daramola, Olutola and Ogunjimi (2017) in school cultures where teachers and leaders communicate high expectations for all students, learners internalize the belief that they can succeed. The authors argue that students are more likely to challenge themselves academically, leading to better grades, test scores, and long-term learning outcomes, as higher teacher expectations can lead to higher students' academic performance (Daramola et al., 2017).

According to Purnadewi, Arnawa and Tatminingsih (2023) in school cultures that promote collaboration, teachers share strategies, analyze student data, and support one another in problem-solving and through this instruction becomes more consistent, innovative, and responsive, raising the overall quality of learning which significantly influences an improvement in the overall students' academic performance. In addition, the authors assert that a supportive school culture that celebrates effort, recognizes achievements, and provides constructive feedback keeps students engaged, leading to higher attendance, greater persistence in challenging tasks, and improved exam performance. For instance, schools that integrate student-led projects and leadership roles often see better students' participation and achievement (Purnadewi et al., 2023).

School culture shapes how teaching is delivered, how students experience learning, and how the school community interacts. A positive, achievement-oriented, and inclusive culture strengthens expectations, relationships, and engagement, all of

which directly and indirectly boost students' academic performance (Angus, MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2019). The authors argue that school cultures built on trust, respect, and care strengthen teacher-student relationships and parental engagement. Strong relationships increase students' sense of belonging, which research links to better students' academic performance and reduced dropout rates (Angus et al., 2019). Similarly, Wang (2023) asserts that school culture in form of physical climate and resources support effective learning through lessening disruptions and ensuring comfort, enriching the students' learning experiences which resultantly leads to an improvement in students' academic performance (Wang, 2023).

A positive school culture plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic performance through encouraging emotional well-being, inspiration, social skills, and efficient teaching strategies. By nurturing supportive relations, certifying safety, and upholding higher expectations, schools can create an atmosphere where students feel valued, empowered, and self-assured to meet their full potential. Conversely, a negative school culture/climate can demoralize students' confidence, performance, and engagement, stressing the essence of prioritizing a positive and inclusive school culture which would lead to an improvement in students' academic performance (Fallahi, Mikaeili & Atadokht, 2019). According to Bozhani, Momeni and Moradi (2025) school cultures that value diversity and integrate students' cultural backgrounds into learning make education more relevant and accessible. Students from marginalized backgrounds feel seen and valued, which boosts students' engagement and performance. The authors argued that culturally responsive teaching in multi-ethnic schools correlates with higher literacy and numeracy outcomes which are indicators of improved students' academic performance (Bozhani et al., 2025).

A strong school culture promotes collaboration among teachers, fostering a professional environment where staff share resources, discuss strategies, and support one another in addressing learning challenges. Schools that prioritize professional learning communities tend to have more consistent instruction and a unified approach to student development (Bayar & Alkan, 2021). The authors argued that a collaborative culture

improves teaching quality, which in turn enhances student learning and academic performance outcomes. Without such professional cohesion, instructional quality can vary widely from classroom to classroom, leading to uneven students' academic performance (Bayar & Alkan, 2021). In addition, the authors assert that school culture exerts a profound influence on students' academic performance. By shaping the quality of teaching, the level of student engagement, and the overall learning environment, school culture often determines whether students merely attend school or truly thrive in it (Bayar & Alkan, 2021). According to Fatih, Nazim, Engin and Yusuf (2020) positive school cultures motivate students by making them feel valued, supported, and recognized for their efforts. When academic success is celebrated, and when students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning, they develop a stronger sense of agency and purpose. A well-structured and supportive school culture nurtures engagement, motivation, and cognitive development, resulting into improved students' academic performance. The authors argued that students' engagement increases when the school environment is safe, inclusive, and responsive to students' needs. Motivated students are more likely to attend school regularly, participate actively in class, and persist through academic challenges, all of which contribute to higher students' academic performance (Fatih et al., 2020).

Teacher commitment influences students' academic performance by enhancing the quality of instruction, motivating and supporting learners, maintaining effective classroom environments, engaging in continuous improvement, persisting through challenges, modelling positive behaviors, and fostering a strong school culture. Committed teachers' passion and dedication directly create the conditions necessary for students to succeed academically (Ngumuta, Kirimi & Mandela, 2024). The authors also assert that committed teachers invest extra effort into lesson planning, differentiating instruction, and using effective teaching strategies tailored to student needs. Their dedication results in clearer explanations, more engaging activities, and timely feedback, all of which enhance student understanding and retention. Classrooms led by highly committed teachers often

achieve higher test scores because lessons are better organized and more responsive (Ngumuta et al., 2024).

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design based on a quantitative approach. A cross-sectional research design is engrossed with evaluating the incidence of some variables in a certain population at a specific time (Kassu, 2019). Therefore, this design was vibrant in examining the influence of school culture on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division at a specific time. A quantitative approach was central in gaining information in numerical form utilized to investigate the study phenomenon.

Target Population and Sample Size

A study population is a group of people with features of interest from which a sample is taken (Majid, 2018). The study population covered school administrators and teachers from various private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division from which a sample was taken. A sample of 90 respondents encompassing 15 school administrators and 75 teachers taken from three private secondary schools selected in Jinja City, Southern Division to provide the quantitative data.

Sampling Procedure

Sampling refers to a procedure of selecting a sample of people from a target population (Singh & Masuku, 2017). The researcher employed convenient sampling to choose respondents to participate in this study. Convenient sampling involves selecting available and accessible participants which was considered to select school administrators and teachers from various private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division to participate in the study.

Data Collection Methods

Questionnaire Survey Method

A questionnaire survey method is a technique for gaining information through a sequence of questions from participants (Anokye, 2020). The questionnaire survey method was crucial in order to attain uniform information that ensures comparability of data

engaging questions that are structured and easy to understand. Hence, this method was engaged as it enables the researcher to attain and gather data from participants in a shortest time available.

Data Collection Instruments Structured Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire is an instrument employed to gather information from participants encompassing structured questions with closed-ended responses out of which they are supposed to pick (Kuphanga, 2024). Structured questionnaires were engaged to gather quantitative data from participants constituting of structured closed-ended questions with encoded answers administered to study participants in various selected private secondary schools. The structured questionnaires were engaged as they necessitate little time and collect massive information on the aspects under investigation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis assists in measuring, analyzing and understanding an aspect through running descriptive analysis and statistical tests. The study engaged descriptive analysis as well as simple linear regression analysis approaches in scrutinizing the quantitative data gathered. Descriptive analysis was engaged when ascertaining participants' demographics. Simple linear regression analysis was engaged to assess the influence of school culture on

students' academic performance in order to provide empirical evidence on study hypotheses at a 5% significance level. Simple linear regression analysis is vibrant in assessing the strength of the effect of the predictor variable and the problem variable (Maulud & Abdulazeez, 2020).

Ethical Consideration

The researcher got an introductory letter from the Department of Post Graduate Studies at Islamic University in Uganda before taking on the study as a pre-requisite to get permission to gather data for research in various schools.

The researcher also sought for respondents' consent to participate in the study and they were fully informed of the study purpose, procedures, and benefits and participation was voluntary without intimidation. The researcher protected the privacy of participants by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity where possible.

Study Findings

This section provides findings in relation to the study objectives.

Findings on the Demographic Arrangement of Participants

This study addressed the demographic arrangement of participants in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division and results specified in Table 4.1;

Table 4.1: Demographic Arrangement of Participants

Demographic Arrangement			
Category	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	38	42.2
	Male	52	57.8
	Total	90	100.0
Age Category	25-30	8	8.9
	31-35	20	22.2
	36-40	26	28.9
	Above 40	36	40.0
	Total	90	100.0
Education Level	Diploma	11	12.2
	Degree	70	77.8
	Masters	9	10.0
	Total	90	100.0
	Single	24	26.7

Marital Status	Married	66	73.3
	Total	90	100.0
Time Worked at the School	1-2 years	14	15.6
	3-5 years	23	25.6
	Above 5 years	53	58.9
	Total	90	100.0

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results in Table 4.1 indicate that of the 90 participants, 38 (42.2%) were female and 52 (57.8%) were male. The findings also indicate that of the 90 participants, 8 (8.9%) were 25-30 years of age, 20 (22.2%) were 31-35 years of age, 26 (28.9%) were 36-40 years of age, and 36 (40.0%) were over 40 years of age.

In addition, findings indicate that of the 90 participants, 11 (12.2%) had gotten diploma, 70 (77.8%) had gotten a degree, and 9 (10.0%) had gotten a masters.

In accordance to marital status, the findings indicate that of the 90 participants, 24 (26.7%) were single and 66 (73.3%) were married. The results further indicate

that of the 90 participants, 14 (15.6%) had worked for a time period of 1-2 years, 23 (25.6%) had worked for a time period of 3-5 years, and 53 (58.9%) had worked for a time period of above 5 years.

Findings on Study Objectives

Influence of Teacher Commitment on Students' Academic Performance in Private Secondary Schools in Jinja City, Southern Division

The study established the influence of teacher commitment on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division and results indicated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Regression on Influence of Teacher Commitment on Students' Academic Performance in Private Secondary Schools in Jinja City, Southern Division

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square		Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.645 ^a	.416		.410	.53985	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher Commitment						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.092	.345		3.168	.002
	Teacher Commitment	.701	.088	.645	7.922	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Students' Academic Performance						

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 4.2 indicates that teacher commitment has a significantly strong and positive influence on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division ($\beta=0.645$, $P\text{-value}=0.000$) at a 5% significance level. The results demonstrate that a unit upsurge in teacher commitment results to an improvement in students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division by 64.5%. The results suggest that enhanced teacher commitment as a result lead to an

improved students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

The model summary shows a coefficient of determination of 0.410, which indicates that teacher commitment explicates 41.0% of the total differences in students' academic performance and the additional 59.0% of the differences are defined by other given factors. This points out that teacher commitment persuasively influences students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City,

Southern Division. Consequently, to enhance students' academic performance, there should be improved teacher commitment in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Influence of Team Work on Students' Academic Performance in Private Secondary Schools in Jinja City, Southern Division

The study determined the influence of team work on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division and results given in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Regression on Influence of Team Work on Students' Academic Performance in Private Secondary Schools in Jinja City, Southern Division

Model Summary						
Model		R	R Square		Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1		.604 ^a	.365		.357	.40808
a. Predictors: (Constant), Team Work						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.767	.359		4.920	.000
	Team Work	.641	.090	.604	7.107	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Students' Academic Performance						

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 4.3 indicates that team work has a significantly strong and positive influence on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division ($\beta=0.604$, $P\text{-value}=0.000$) at a 5% significance level. The results validate that a unit surge in team work results to an improvement in students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division by 60.4%. The results propose that increased team work as a result leads to an improved students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division. The model summary illustrates a coefficient of determination of 0.357, which indicates that team work defines 35.7% of the total differences in students' academic performance and the additional 64.3% of the

differences are provided by other given factors. This points out that team work convincingly influences students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division. Subsequently, to boost students' academic performance, there should be improved team work in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Influence of Time Management on Students' Academic Performance in Private Secondary Schools in Jinja City, Southern Division

The study assessed the influence of time management on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division and results indicated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Regression on Influence of Time Management on Students' Academic Performance in Private Secondary Schools in Jinja City, Southern Division

Model Summary						
Model		R	R Square		Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1		.340 ^a	.115		.105	.48151
a. Predictors: (Constant), Time Management						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.272	.307		10.646	.000
	Time Management	.267	.079	.340	3.390	.001
a. Dependent Variable: Students' Academic Performance						

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 4.4 indicates that time management has a significantly weak and positive influence on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division ($\beta=0.340$, $P\text{-value}=0.001$) at a 5% significance level. The results determine that a unit increase in time management results to an improvement in students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division by 34.0%. This implies that increased time management as a result lead to an improved students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

The model summary shows a coefficient of determination of 0.105, which indicates that time management elucidates 10.5% of the total differences in students' academic performance and the residual 89.5% of the differences are explained by other given factors. This points out that time management slightly influences students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division. Accordingly, to enhance students' academic performance, there should be improved time management in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Conclusions

This study concludes that school culture outstandingly influences students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division in that an improvement in teacher commitment, team work, and time management resultantly would lead to improved students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that teachers and the school administration should promote a positive learning environment through fostering mutual respect, inclusivity, and belonging for all students as this would directly and significantly influence students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

The researcher also recommends that teachers and the administration should promote teamwork, study groups, and peer tutoring to enhance collective learning as well as build platforms for student leadership and participation in decision-making as this plays a huge role in shaping students' motivation, engagement, and ultimately their academic performance in private secondary schools in Jinja City, Southern Division.

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