

## Career development and the discipline of Learners in secondary schools in Kiruhura District, Western Uganda

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### Abstract

The study explored the connection between career development and the learners' discipline in secondary schools in Kiruhura District, Uganda. The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between career development and discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura District, western Uganda. A cross-sectional research design and mixed-methods approach were employed. The target population was 2758 individuals, comprising 2579 learners, 7 head teachers, and 172 teachers. The sample size was 349, determined using Slovene's formula. Seven schools and head teachers were purposively selected, and 321 learners and 21 teachers were selected using simple random and stratified sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Content validity index and Cronbach's alpha were used to determine the validity and reliability of quantitative data. To guarantee the reliability of the data, the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and summary tables. Inferential analysis showed that there were significant positive and weak relationships between career development and the discipline of learners ( $r = .07$ ,  $p = .047$ ). The study concluded that career development positively influenced learners' discipline. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education introduce career weeks in secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Career development, Discipline of learners, Career week, Cross-sectional research design, Mixed method

### Introduction

The historical view of discipline in secondary schools has changed throughout time to reflect shifts in educational philosophies, student behavior techniques, and societal standards (Burden, 2020). According to Glaser (2019), Strict Authority and Corporal Punishment; Transition to Progressive Education; Student Activism and the Civil Rights Movement; Zero Tolerance Policies; Restorative Justice and Positive Behavior Interventions; Cyberbullying and Online Behavior; Social Emotional Learning and Trauma-Informed Practices are some of the historical developments in secondary school discipline (Bartlett, Law, Schugurensky, Díaz & Wolfersteig, 2021).

According to Seoka (2019), secondary schools frequently followed a rigid disciplinary paradigm in the early 20th century, one that included the use of corporal punishment and authoritarianism (Hwang, Allen & Tokosi, 2021). Significant power was vested in teachers and administrators, and physical punishment, such as caning or paddling, was frequently applied (Seoka, 2019). Education theorists like John Dewey contributed to the transition toward progressive education that occurred in the middle of the 20th century (Tisdall, 2019). This method placed more emphasis on a customized and student-centered learning process (Ahmed & Mikail, 2023).

Career development includes career exploration, in which career counselors assist learners in determining their interests, skills, and potential career paths (Patton &

McMahon, 2021). This encourages individuals to remain committed to their academic and personal objectives by enabling them to make well-informed decisions about their future (Patton & McMahon, 2021). Conversely, behavioral intervention focuses on identifying behaviors and developing preventative measures (Carey, Connell, Johnston, Rothman, De Bruin, Kelly, Michie, 2019). When it comes to seeing behavioral problems early on and taking appropriate action to address them, counselors are invaluable (Carey et al., 2019). This proactive approach promotes the learner's general well-being and helps avoid more significant disciplinary issues (Carey et al., 2019).

### Statement of the Problem

Kiruhura district public secondary schools are expected to have a good school climate, strong leadership, well-defined policies, encouraging connections, interesting curriculum, and cooperative efforts from staff, parents, and learners (Nimusiima, 2022). This fosters an atmosphere that is favorable to education, growth, and general wellbeing (Mbabazi et al, 2019). A comprehensive and collaborative approach involving educators, administrators, parents, learners, and the community might be beneficial for schools that are facing discipline problems (Burden, 2020). School environments can be made more positive and accommodating by addressing the root causes of behavioral difficulties and putting effective strategies into place (Burden, 2020).

Despite the effort made by the Ministry of Education to manage the discipline of learners in secondary schools, as evidenced by the establishment of guidance and counseling departments in every secondary school, cases of indiscipline of varied nature continue in these schools, with a new dimension (Bagaya & Mbabazi, 2019). In secondary schools in the Kiruhura district, there is little to no collaborative approach to handling student discipline (Nimusiima, 2022). Disruptive behaviors in the classroom, like talking out of turn and showing contempt for the teachers, are persistent (Burden, 2020). Lower academic attainment, a poor school culture, and a lack of concentration on learning are the results of this disruptive behavior, greater absenteeism and dropout rates among learners, demoralizing teachers, and making it difficult to sustain a productive and positive learning environment (Mbabazi & Bagaya, 2019).

If the current trend of educational waste is not reversed, Kiruhura district will lose an entire generation. The children may become unemployed as a result of the increased dropout rates and decreased academic achievement (Nimusiima, 2022). This suggests that Kiruhura will be reliant on skilled laborers from nearby areas. In Kiruhura district, there may also be a rise in domestic crime and poverty (Bafaki, 2021). This context informs the research's goal to better understand how guidance and counseling might improve learners' conduct in secondary schools in the Kiruhura District.

### Objective

The study was guided by the following objective:

To determine the relationship between career development and the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura District, Western Uganda.

### Research Question

What is the relationship between career development and discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district, Western Uganda?

### Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between career development and the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura District, Western Uganda.

### Literature Review

#### Career Development

Guidance and counseling play a pivotal role in shaping learners' career development, which, in turn, can influence their behavior and discipline in school. Trait-and-Factor Theory (Parsons, 1909) emphasizes aligning learners' traits, interests, and abilities with suitable career choices. In the context of the study, counseling interventions can help students identify their strengths and match them with career goals, thereby improving their focus and reducing disciplinary problems often linked to a lack of direction.

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent & Brown, 2019) also provides insight into how self-efficacy and social factors influence career development. According to SCCT, learners who receive guidance and counseling are better able to set career goals and develop the confidence to pursue them. Counselors help students recognize their potential and

navigate challenges, reducing the likelihood of behavior problems that arise from uncertainty or lack of career direction. Flores and Kyere (2021) highlight the importance of involving families and communities in supporting career development, which contributes to improved discipline and behavior in school.

In secondary schools in Kiruhura District, guidance counselors can help students set realistic academic and career goals, thereby improving their focus and reducing misbehavior caused by disengagement or lack of purpose.

### Conceptual Framework

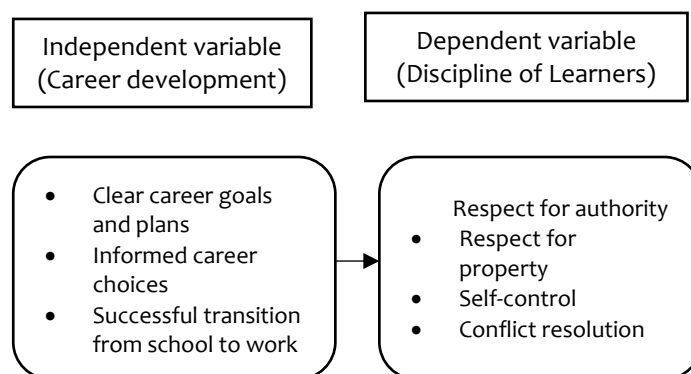


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Lity type to utilize (Gadernann, Guhn, & Zumbo, 2019). Because the questions in this study were on an interval/ratio scale, reliability was evaluated using internal consistency. Since Cronbach's Alpha measures test reliability by comparing an item's proximity to a collection of questions, it was utilized.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of methodically characterizing, summarizing, and analyzing collected data using statistical and logical techniques (Montgomery, 2019). This held for data that was collected from the quantitative data. According to Montgomery (2019), to achieve the required levels of quality, accuracy, and completeness, data must be collected, assembled, sorted, edited, and coded. Once the data is loaded into the computer, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is used for analysis (Abu-Bader, 2021). The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was employed to evaluate the association between the role of guidance and counseling in the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura District, Western Uganda.

### Ethical Consideration

The researcher respected respondents' rights while being truthful (Hancock, Naaman, & Levy, 2020). Obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, respecting individual rights to privacy, and being truthful when sharing data were necessary for this. Informed permission was conditioned on each respondent's voluntary, knowledgeable, and intelligent participation in the study. As a result, after explaining the goal of the study to the respondents, the researcher gave them freedom to assent or not by having them fill out a consent form (Hancock et al, 2020). Anonymity

was preserved by hiding the respondents' identities and keeping them unrelated to their responses.

### Results of the Study

The study's data analysis, interpretation, and discussions are presented in this part. The presentations will go as follows: descriptive statistics on the demographics of the respondents, quantitative data analysis, Pearson correlation, and discussions.

#### Leaners' Questionnaire Response Rate

Out of 342 questionnaires sent out, 312 were returned, which represented a response rate of 90 %. Thirty (30) or 10 % were not returned

**Table 1 Questionnaire Response Rate**

No. of Leaners' questionnaires	Teachers'		Teachers'	
	Tally	Percentage	Tally	Percentage
Returned	287	89	19	90
Not Returned	34	11	2	10
Total	321	100	21	100

Source: Primary Data

Three hundred and twenty-one questionnaires were sent out to learners, out of which 287 were returned and 34 were not returned. The questionnaires returned constituted 89 % of the total questionnaires sent out. For the case of teachers, 21 questionnaires were sent out, and 19 questionnaires were returned, 2 were not returned, which represented 90% and 10 % respectively. This high response rate was attributed to the researcher personally delivering questionnaires to the learners and teachers, and picking them up once they had been completed.

### Descriptive Statistics

This section captured the mean and standard deviation of the variables and the responses by respondents on each of the variables (consistent timely attendance, consistent academic performance, effective study session, and student's academic performance)

**Table 11. Career Development and Discipline of Learners**

Questionnaire Item	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. Leaners have a clear understanding of the career options available in their field of interest.	21	30	115	140	3.222	2.105
2. Leaners are aware of the skills and qualifications needed for the career they are interested in.	30	40	100	136	3.118	1.477
3. Leaners have set specific career goals for themselves.	9	47	150	100	3.114	3.580
4. Leaners have a plan in place to achieve their career goals.	20	45	150	91	3.020	3.718

### Mean and Standard Deviation of the Variables

**Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Variables**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Career Development Discipline of Learners	3.134	.355
	2.442	.184

Source: Primary Data 2024

Results in Table 10 show that three variables (Career Development, Life Skills Development, Parent and Community Involvement) had a mean of between 3 and 4, signifying agreement.

### Career Development and the Discipline of Learners

Table 12 shows the responses on the variables career development and Discipline of learners. The results in table 12 indicate that 21 (7 %), 30 (10 %), 115 (38 %), and 140 (45 %), of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, remained neutral, agreed and strongly agreed respectively that learners had a clear understanding of the career options available in their field of interest. Overall, 255 (83 %) of the respondents agreed in one way or another that learners had a clear understanding of the career options available in their field of interest.

The responses on this item had a mean of 3.22 and a standard deviation of 2.105. Regarding the responses on item 2; 30 (10 %), 40 (13 %), 100 (33 %), and 136 (44 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed respectively, that learners were aware of the skills and qualifications needed for the career they are interested in. Overall, 236 (77 %) of the respondents agreed in some way that learners were aware of the skills and qualifications needed for the career they are interested in. These responses had a mean of 3.118 and a standard deviation of 1.477

Further results from Table 12 indicate that 9 (3 %), 47 (15 %), 150 (49 %), and 100 (33 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed that Leaners had set specific career goals for themselves. Overall, 250 (82 %) of the respondents agreed that learners had set specific career goals for themselves, while 56 (18 %) disagreed. The mean of all the responses on this item was mean of 3.114, and the standard deviation of 3.580. Regarding whether the learners had a plan in place to achieve their career goals, 20 (7 %), 45 (15 %), 150 (49 %), and 91 (30 %) strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed. Overall, 65 (22 %) of the learners disagreed while 241 (79 %) agreed. The responses on this item had a mean of 3.020 and a standard deviation of 3.718.

5. Leaners actively seek opportunities to develop skills relevant to their desired career.	21	35	140	110	3.108	4.039
6. Leaners participate in extracurricular activities or internships to gain practical experience.	6	40	100	150	3.222	5.253
7. Leaners receive guidance and support from the school or mentors regarding their career choices.	11	35	160	100	3.141	1.675
8. Leaners regularly discuss their career plans with a counsellor or career advisor.	12	39	148	107	3.144	1.353
9. Leaners are motivated to work hard in school because they understand how it impacts their future career.	10	36	160	100	3.144	0.316
10. Leaners stay informed about trends and developments in their field of interest.	26	65	110	105	2.961	2.899
11. Leaners actively seek to build a professional network in their field of interest.	20	45	132	109	3.078	6.801
12. Learners attend career fairs, workshops, or seminars related to their career interests.	31	39	136	100	3.000	8.383

Source: Primary Data

Regarding the responses on item 5, 21 (7 %), 35 (11 %), 140 (46 %), and 110 (36 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed that learners actively sought opportunities to develop skills relevant to their desired career. Overall, 250 (82 %) of the respondents agreed that learners actively sought opportunities to develop skills relevant to their desired career. The mean of all their responses was 3.108, meaning that the respondents tended to agree that learners actively sought opportunities to develop skills relevant to their desired career. On item, 6 the responses were as follows: 6 (2 %), 40 (13 %), 100 (33 %), and 150 (52 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed respectively that learners participated in extracurricular activities or internships to gain practical experience. Overall, 250 (82 %) agreed in some way that learners participated in extracurricular activities or internships to gain practical experience. All the responses on this item had a mean of 3.222 and a standard deviation of 5.253

Concerning Item 7, 11 (4 %), 35 (11 %), 160 (52 %), and 100 (33 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed, respectively, that learners received guidance and support from the school or mentors regarding their career choices. Overall, 260 (85 %) agreed in some way that learners received guidance and support from the school or mentors regarding their career choices. These responses had a mean of 3.144 and a standard deviation of 0.316. When asked whether learners regularly discussed their career plans with a counsellor or career advisor; 12 (4 %), 39 (13 %), 148 (48 %), and 107 (35 %) of the learners strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed respectively that the learners regularly discussed their career plans with a counsellor or career advisor. Overall, 155 (83 %) of the respondents agreed that learners regularly discussed their career plans with a counsellor or career advisor. The mean of their responses was 3.144, and the standard deviation of 1.353.

Regarding whether leaners were motivated to work hard in school because they understood how it impacted their future career; 10 (3 %), 36 (12 %), 160 (52 %), 100 (33 %) strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed respectively that learners were motivated to work hard in school because they understood how it impacted their future career. Overall,

260 (85 %) of the respondents agreed in one way or another that learners were motivated to work hard in school because they understood how it impacted their future career. The responses on this item had a mean of 3.144 and standard deviation of 0.316. In relation to whether, leaners stayed informed about trends and developments in their field of interest; 26 (8 %), 65 (21 %), 110 (36 %), and 105 (35 %) strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed respectively that learners stayed informed about trends and developments in their field of interest. Overall, 215 (71 %) of the respondents agreed in one way or another that learners stayed informed about trends and developments in their field of interest. The mean of all the responses was 2.961, and the standard deviation of 2.899

For whether leaners actively sought to build a professional network in their field of interest; 20 (7 %), 45 (15 %), 132 (43 %), and 109 (35 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed respectively that learners actively sought to build a professional network in their field of interest. Overall, 241 (78 %) of the respondents agreed in one way or another that learners actively sought to build a professional network in their field of interest. About whether, leaners attended career fairs, workshops, or seminars related to their career interests; 15 (5 %), 30 (10 %), 155 (51%), 106 (34 %), strongly disagreed, disagreed, neutral, agreed and strongly agreed that learners attended career fairs, workshops, or seminars related to their career interests. Overall, 261 (85 %) of the respondents agreed in one way or another that learners attended career fairs, workshops, or seminars related to their career interests.

### Inferential Statistics

#### Pearson Correlation

Data from the questionnaire were analyzed by correlating the independent variable (Career Development) with the dependent variable (Discipline of Learners).

#### Career Development and the Discipline of Learners

To establish the strength of the linear relationship between Career Development and Discipline of Learners, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant relationship between career development and the discipline of learners in public



secondary schools in Kiruhura district, Western Uganda” was tested at alpha- level .05. The results of the test are presented in Table 5.

**Table 3.** Correlations Between Career Development and Discipline of Learners

Variable	Correlation	Career Development	Discipline of Learners
Career Development	Pearson	1	.07
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.229
	N	306	306
Discipline of Learners	Pearson	.07	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.229	
	N	306	306

Source: Primary Data

The results in Table 17 indicate a Pearson correlation coefficient of .07, which implies that the relationship is significant at an alpha level of 0.05. The test established that there was a weak positive relationship between the variables ( $r(304) = .07, p = .047$ ). The p- p-value of .047 is less than 0.05; thus, the null hypothesis, “There is no significant relationship between career development and the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district, Western Uganda,” was rejected.

### Interview Analysis

#### Interview Data Analysis

Interview data was collected by interviewing seven head teachers, and the data analyzed in order to corroborate the results with the results of correlations. While analyzing the interview data, the following themes emerged: Guarantees by schools for high academic achievement by learners; promotion of Career planning and Development among learners and teachers; Acquisition of life skills by learners; and Parents and Community involvement in school matters.

### Discussion

#### Career Development and Discipline of Learners

The results presented indicate a weak positive correlation of  $r = .07$  between career development and learner discipline, which suggests a significant but modest relationship between the two variables ( $p = .047$ ). The rejection of the null hypothesis ( $p < 0.05$ ) implies that career development initiatives can have an influence on the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura District, Western Uganda, although the relationship is relatively weak. The interview results from headteachers further support this view, with most highlighting the importance of career development programs in reducing disciplinary issues. Headteachers pointed out that by offering career awareness programs, project-based learning, and integrating career development into the curriculum, schools provide students with both direction and motivation, which, in turn, helps improve their behavior. However, **Smith (2022)** and **Lee (2021)** offer a more critical perspective, suggesting that while career development initiatives are beneficial, they are not sufficient

by themselves to ensure improved discipline among students. **Smith (2022)** highlights that career-focused programs, when not accompanied by appropriate behavioral management strategies or emotional support, may not lead to significant changes in student discipline. **Lee (2021)** further argues that career development should be part of a broader holistic approach, where students’ emotional, psychological, and social needs are also addressed to achieve better discipline outcomes. Without such support, students may still struggle with behavioral issues despite career development efforts.

### Conclusion

From the study findings for the objective career development and the discipline of learners, A Pearson correlation coefficient of .07 was obtained in the correlation analysis, implying that the relationship between career development and discipline is significant at an alpha level of 0.05. The test further revealed that there was a weak positive relationship between the variables ( $r(304) = .07, p = .047$ ). Since the p- p-value of .047 is less than 0.05, there was a significant relationship between career development and the discipline of learners in public secondary schools in Kiruhura district, Western Uganda.

### Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Sports should introduce a career week in secondary schools in Uganda so that all schools can participate. Career counseling programs should be integrated into the school curriculum to help students understand how career development ties into their discipline. By exposing students to the consequences of career choices linked to discipline, they can be more motivated to make positive behavioral decisions.

### Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings, it has been suggested that there is a need to explore the effectiveness of various training programs for counselors in promoting learner discipline.

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