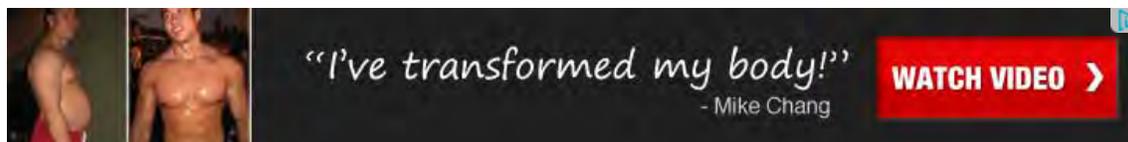


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Research reveals heavy school bags causing children back pain

By Patience Ahimbisibwe ([email the author](#))
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A new study by Makerere University has stirred a new debate on the relevance of school children carrying kilogrammes of reading materials in back-breaking school bags.

While the issue came years ago with focus mainly on the relevance of carrying many books and whether the children actually make use of the many text and exercise books, the new study points to a possibly more dangerous scenario -injury and deformity of the children.

The study by Dr Erisa Sabakaki of the College of Health Sciences, shows that 88.2 per cent of pupils experience body pains, especially in the neck, shoulders and upper back.

At least 39 per cent reported complaints related to lower back pain.

The findings were released after interviewing at least 532 primary school pupils from three urban and three rural schools.

The sight of little children labouring with a heavy load on their backs is a common occurrence, especially in "prominent" urban schools mainly the primary sections that run day programmes.

Heavy loads

The bags mainly contain heavy exercise books or counter books or black and a multitude of text books.

The research shows a close relationship between lower back pain and schoolbag type, the way the bag is carried, the duration spent walking and the time spent sitting while studying, watching television and using computers after school.

About 30.8 per cent of the pupils carried school bags which were too heavy for their weight.

According to Dr Sabakaki, it is recommended that a child carries a weight limit of only 10 per cent of their body weight.

"Repeated carrying of heavy schoolbags leads to straining of both the muscles and ligaments of the back. Since these children's bodies are rapidly growing, this repeated strain injury could lead to structural damage by affecting the growing bones," Dr Sabakaki said.

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