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Original article

Student management practices and academic performance in selected Universal Primary Education schools in Keri Town Council, Koboko District, Uganda. A cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Background:

Student management, which covers discipline, attendance monitoring, guidance and counselling, and co-curricular involvement, is central to school management and learner achievement. This study examined the relationship between student management practices and academic performance in selected UPE schools.

Methods:

A cross-sectional, correlational study with a mixed-methods approach was conducted in five UPE schools. Structured questionnaires were completed by 105 respondents (75 teachers and 30 School Management Committee (SMC) members) selected through stratified random sampling. Five head teachers were purposively selected for interviews, and 17 school documents were reviewed. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression in SPSS, and thematic analysis for interviews.

Results:

Most respondents were male (58.1%) and teachers (71.4%), and 53.3% held a bachelor's or postgraduate qualification. Student management was rated moderate (mean = 3.31), as was academic performance (mean = 3.02). Student management correlated positively and significantly with academic performance ($r = .272$, $p = .005$). Head teachers reported uneven rule enforcement, limited follow-up of absenteeism because of distance, transport, and time, and counselling without protected time or space. PLE records showed the pass rate fell from 48.6% in 2021 to 41.1% in 2025.

Conclusion:

Student management practices are positively but modestly related to academic performance. Rules, registers, and class-teacher guidance exist, but uneven enforcement, limited absenteeism follow-up, and unstructured counselling reduce their effect.

Recommendation:

Schools should strengthen early communication with parents on absenteeism, and the district should provide a small allocation to support follow-up visits.

Keywords: *student management practices, academic performance, attendance monitoring, guidance and counselling; Universal Primary Education, Koboko District.*
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Background

Student management is a core component of school management. It involves regulating, guiding, and supporting learners to promote discipline, attendance, engagement, and academic success (Kaweesi et al., 2023; Mugizi et al., 2023). It is commonly operationalised through four practices: discipline management, attendance monitoring, guidance and counseling, and co-curricular involvement. When these practices are applied effectively, schools create an environment that supports learning and enhances academic performance. Discipline management helps schools minimize disruptions and maximize instructional time, which is associated with better academic outcomes (Mpiti et al., 2025). Attendance monitoring ensures continuity of learning, whereas chronic absenteeism is linked to poorer literacy and numeracy outcomes (Uwase, 2025). Guidance and counseling services support learners' emotional and social well-being, thereby improving concentration and academic achievement (Mugizi et al., 2023). Participation in co-curricular activities such as sports, clubs, and debates strengthens motivation, social skills, and school attachment, which contribute to learner performance (Ralebese et al., 2025). Open communication between school administration and learners further promotes student voice, participation, and engagement (Tshabalala & Faremi, 2024).

In Uganda, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme has expanded access to primary education, particularly for learners from low-income households. This expansion has increased enrolment and placed pressure on school systems. Public primary schools often operate with large class sizes, inadequate counseling services, and limited resources, which compromise effective student management. These constraints can weaken discipline,

attendance monitoring, learner support, and engagement, and may in turn undermine academic performance.

In Keri Town Council, Koboko District, UPE schools serve a large population of learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and concerns about learner performance persist. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how student management practices relate to academic performance in these schools. Generating such evidence is necessary to guide head teachers, school management committees, and education authorities in strengthening student management. Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools in Keri Town Council are expected to enable most of their pupils to pass the Primary Leaving Examination in good divisions, so that they can progress to secondary and vocational education (Ministry of Education and Sports [MoES], 2022). However, academic performance in these schools has remained low. Over the five years from 2019 to 2023, the average PLE pass rate of UPE schools in Keri Town Council was 48%, compared with the national average of 68%, and only 12% of all the candidates who sat the PLE in those five years attained Division One or Division Two, while 34% were in Division Four or ungraded (UNEB, 2023). This study therefore examined student management practices and academic performance in selected UPE schools in Keri Town Council, Koboko District, Uganda.

Methodology.

Research Design

The study adopted a correlational research design. The design was appropriate for this study for three reasons. First, the purpose and all three specific objectives sought to establish the relationship between school management practices (student, academic, and financial management) and academic performance, which is exactly what a correlational design is meant to do. Second, the researcher could not manipulate how schools manage learners, teaching, or finances, so an experimental design was not possible; the study instead measured these practices as they existed in the schools. Third, the design allowed the use of Pearson's correlation and multiple regression to establish which practice was most strongly related to academic performance.

Data were collected at one point in time (cross-sectionally), and the study used a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires and from examination records, while qualitative data from interviews with head teachers helped to explain the relationships found.

Study Population

The study was conducted in five selected UPE schools in Keri Town Council: Apa Primary School, Koboko Primary School, Birijaku Primary School, Nyaliro Primary School and St. Catherine Primary School. In this dissertation, they are referred to as School 1 to School 5, and not in that order, to protect their identity. The five schools were selected because they are government-aided UPE schools within Keri Town Council, presented PLE candidates every year from 2021 to 2025, and kept the examination and financial records needed for the study. The number of schools was manageable within the time and resources available for the study. The study population comprised 130 people in three categories: Administrative staff (5): the head teachers of the five schools, who are responsible for managing the schools, supervising teaching, and keeping school records. They are classified as administrative staff, not teaching staff, because their main role in the study is the management of the school. Teachers (75): the classroom teachers of the five schools, an average of 15 teachers per school, who implemented student and academic management practices.

School Management Committee members (50): an average of 10 members per school, who oversaw school management and the use of school funds. Primary Seven pupils were excluded from the study population because they are minors. Information on pupils' academic performance was instead obtained from school and district examination records and from administrative staff.

Sample Size

The sample size for teachers and School Management Committee members, who provided the quantitative data, was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method, based on the formula:

$s = X^2NP\,(1 - P) / [d^2(N - 1) + X^2P(1 - P)]$

where s is the sample size, X^2 is the chi-square value for one degree of freedom at the 95% confidence level (3.841), N is the population (125 teachers and SMC members), P is the population proportion (0.50), and d is the margin of error (0.05). Substituting the values gives $s = (3.841 \times 125 \times 0.25) / [(0.0025 \times 124) + (3.841 \times 0.25)] = 120.03 / 1.270 = 94$, which lies between the table values of 92 for a population of 120 and 97 for a population of 130. The 94 respondents were allocated in proportion to the size of each category: 56 teachers ($75/125 \times 94$) and 38 SMC members ($50/125 \times 94$). The five head teachers were all included as key informants.

Adjustment for non-response: Not every questionnaire distributed is returned or fully completed. Bartlett, Kotrlik and Higgins (2001) recommend that researchers increase the minimum sample size to allow for the expected rate of non-response, by dividing the minimum sample by the expected response rate, so that the number of usable responses does not fall below the minimum required. In this study, an allowance of 12% non-response (an expected response rate of 88%) was made. This rate was chosen because some teachers might be absent, on leave, or transferred during data collection; some SMC members do not come to school regularly and might be difficult to reach, and some questionnaires might be returned incomplete. A larger allowance was not considered necessary because the questionnaires were delivered and collected in person by the researcher. The number of questionnaires to be distributed was therefore $94 \div 0.88 = 107$, made up of 64 teachers ($56 \div 0.88$) and 43 SMC members ($38 \div 0.88$).

Table 1: Study Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Category of respondents	Population (N)	Minimum sample (n)	Sample after 12% non-response allowance	Sampling technique
Administrative staff (head teachers)	5	5	5	Purposive sampling
Teachers	75	56	64	Stratified random sampling
School Management Committee members	50	38	43	Stratified random sampling
Total	130	99	112	

Source: *Koboko District Education Office (2025); Krejcie and Morgan (1970); Bartlett et al. (2001).*

Sampling Techniques

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select the five head teachers as administrative staff and key informants. They were deliberately selected because they are the principal administrators of their schools and hold first-hand information on student management, academic supervision, financial planning, and the schools' examination results.

Stratified Random Sampling

Stratified random sampling was used to select teachers and SMC members. Each school formed a stratum. Within each school, lists of teachers and SMC members were obtained from the head teacher, and respondents were selected by simple random sampling using the lottery method, giving every member an equal chance of selection.

Data Collection Methods

Questionnaires

Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers and SMC members on student, academic, and financial management practices and on academic performance. Questionnaires were appropriate because they allowed data to be collected from many respondents in a short time and ensured uniformity of responses for statistical analysis.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the five head teachers using an interview guide to obtain in-depth information on management practices, the schools' examination results, and the challenges affecting academic performance. Each interview lasted about 30 to 45 minutes, and the responses were recorded in writing by the researcher.

Document Review

Document review was used to obtain the PLE results of the five schools for 2021-2025 (candidates in each division, pass rates and mean aggregates), together with records on attendance, supervision, budgets and expenditure of the capitation grant. The 17 documents on the checklist were examined, and their availability and main findings were recorded. These data were used to present the trend of academic performance and to verify the questionnaire and interview data. Only school-level summary figures were recorded; no pupil's name or individual result was collected. The PLE results were obtained as totals for the five schools combined, and end-of-term examination results were not obtained in a form that could be analyzed.

Data Collection Instruments

Self-Administered Questionnaire

The questionnaire had three sections: Section A, background information; Section B, student management practices (12 items); Section C, academic performance (9 items). Items in Sections

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide with 11 open-ended questions on each management practice and on the schools' academic performance was used with the head teachers, allowing the researcher to probe for explanations and examples.

Document Review Checklist

A document review checklist guided the extraction of PLE results and the review of other relevant records from each school.

Measurement of Variables

School management practices, the independent variable, were measured through teachers' and SMC members' ratings of student management (Section B) using mean scores on the five-point scale. Academic performance, the dependent variable, was measured through Section C of the questionnaire and through PLE results from records: the percentage of candidates in each division, the pass rate (Divisions I–III), the mean aggregate, and the change in these figures from 2021 to 2025. Mean scores were interpreted as follows: 1.00–1.80 very low, 1.81–2.60 low, 2.61–3.40 moderate, 3.41–4.20 high, and 4.21–5.00 very high.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Validity of Instruments

The instruments were developed from the study objectives and the literature, and were reviewed by the research supervisor and experts in educational administration and management, who rated each item as relevant or not relevant. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed as the number of items rated relevant divided by the total number of items, and a CVI of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable (Amin, 2005). Items rated irrelevant or unclear were revised or removed. The CVI obtained was 0.90 (45 of the 50 scale items were rated relevant), so the instrument was accepted as valid.

Reliability of Instruments

The questionnaire was pilot-tested on teachers and SMC members of a UPE school outside the selected schools. Ten respondents took part in the pilot study, and a few items were reworded afterwards. Internal consistency was computed using Cronbach's alpha, and a coefficient of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable. The coefficients obtained in the main study are reported.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the university and sought permission from the Koboko District Education Office and the head teachers of the selected schools. The instruments were pilot-tested and revised. Lists of teachers and SMC members were obtained, and respondents were selected. Questionnaires were delivered in person to the selected teachers and SMC members after obtaining their informed consent, and collected on the same day or at an agreed time. Respondents who had not returned questionnaires were followed up. Interviews were held with the head teachers at times convenient to them. PLE results and other records were reviewed with the help of the head teachers and the District Education Office. All instruments were checked for completeness, and the actual response rate was computed.

Data Analysis Methods

Quantitative Data Analysis

Questionnaire data were edited, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) were used to summarise the data. PLE results for 2021–2025 were presented in tables and a line graph showing the trend in divisions, pass rates, and mean aggregates. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to establish the strength and direction of the relationship between Student management practice and academic performance, and the size of the coefficients was interpreted using the guide of Cohen (1988): 0.10 small, 0.30 medium and 0.50 large.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Interview data were transcribed and analyzed thematically following the six phases of Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Responses were coded and grouped into themes aligned with the three objectives, and selected quotations were used to explain the quantitative findings. Documentary data were summarised by availability and main findings and compared with the questionnaire and interview results.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent: All respondents, who were adults, were informed of the purpose and procedures of the study, and their written or verbal consent was obtained before data collection. Exclusion of minors: Primary Seven pupils and other pupils were not respondents. Pupils' academic performance was obtained only from official records, with permission from the District Education Office and head teachers, and only school-level summary figures were recorded. Confidentiality and anonymity: Respondents' identities were not disclosed; codes were used instead of names, and data were stored securely and used only for academic purposes. Voluntary participation: Respondents were free to decline or withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

Permission and approval: An introductory letter was obtained from the university, and authorisation was sought from the Koboko District Education Office and the head teachers before data collection.

Results

Response Rate

Table 2: Response Rate by Category of Respondents

Category of respondents	Population	Planned sample	Achieved	Achieved as % of planned
Head teachers (interviews)	5	5	5	100.0
Teachers (questionnaire)	75	64	75	117.2
SMC members (questionnaire)	50	43	30	69.8
Total	130	112	110	98.2

Source: *Primary data (2026).*

Table 2 shows that 105 usable questionnaires were obtained against 107 planned (98.1%), made up of 75 teachers and 30 SMC members, and that all five head teachers (100%) were interviewed. According to Amin (2005), a response rate above 70% is adequate for analysis and reporting, so the response rate was considered adequate. The mix of respondents differed from the plan in Table 3.1. All 75 teachers in the five schools took part, 11 more than the 64 planned, because they were available during data collection and the number of teachers was small; 30 of the 43 planned SMC members (69.8%) returned questionnaires, since some members could not be reached. The sample was spread equally across the schools, with 21 respondents in each (15 teachers and six SMC members), instead of in proportion to the number of teachers and SMC members in each school. Document review covered all 17 documents on the checklist for the five schools combined; 11 were available in full, and six were partly available. The PLE results for 2021 to 2025 were obtained as one set of school-level totals for the five schools together, so the trend can be described for the group but not compared school by school.

Background Characteristics of Questionnaire Respondents

Table 3: Background Characteristics of Questionnaire Respondents (n = 105)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
School	School 1	21	20.0
	School 2	21	20.0
	School 3	21	20.0
	School 4	21	20.0
	School 5	21	20.0
Position	Teacher	75	71.4
	SMC member	30	28.6
Gender	Male	61	58.1
	Female	44	41.9
Age group	Below 25	2	1.9
	25–34	37	35.2
	35–44	33	31.4
	45–54	24	22.9
	55+	9	8.6
Highest education	Certificate	13	12.4
	Diploma	36	34.3
	Bachelor's degree	51	48.6
	Postgraduate	5	4.8
Teaching experience	<1 year	12	11.4
	1–5 years	16	15.2
	6–10 years	28	26.7
	Above 10 years	19	18.1
	Not applicable	30	28.6

Source: *Primary data (2026).*

Men made up 58.1% of the respondents and women 41.9%. Most respondents (66.7%) were aged 25 to 44 years. About 53.3% held a bachelor's degree or a postgraduate qualification, 34.3% held a diploma, and 12.4% held a certificate. Teachers made up 71.4% of the sample and SMC members 28.6%. Of the teachers, 62.7% had taught for more than five years and 16.0% for less than a year. The respondents were therefore mostly mature, qualified people with several years of contact with their schools, who were in a position to judge how the schools were managed. The number of respondents was the same in each school (21), so no school dominated the results.

The five head teachers were interviewed because they are the principal managers of their schools and hold first-hand information on discipline, supervision, budgeting and examination results. They were asked the 11 questions, and their full responses are reproduced in

Academic Performance

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Academic Performance (n = 105)

No.	Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
E1	Learners in this school perform well in national examinations.	3.10	0.95	Moderate
E2	The school registers high pass rates in literacy.	2.90	0.99	Moderate
E3	The school registers high pass rates in numeracy.	3.09	0.95	Moderate
E4	Learners show improvement in academic performance over time.	3.01	0.91	Moderate
E5	Most learners achieve expected academic standards for their class level.	3.08	1.03	Moderate
E6	Continuous assessment results show satisfactory academic performance.	3.06	1.07	Moderate
E7	Learners demonstrate good reading and writing skills.	3.03	0.91	Moderate
E8	Learners demonstrate good numeracy and problem-solving skills.	2.92	0.95	Moderate
E9	The overall academic performance of this school is satisfactory.	3.05	0.97	Moderate
	Overall mean for academic performance	3.02	0.58	Moderate

Source: *Primary data (2026).*

The overall mean score for academic performance was M = 3.02, SD = 0.58, which is moderate on the interpretation guide in Section 3.7. Only 31.6% of the responses to the items in this section were "agree" or "strongly agree", 39.7% were "not sure," and 28.7% were "disagree" or "strongly disagree". Item means lay in a narrow band, from 2.90 to 3.10, so no single aspect stood out. The highest-rated item was E1 ("Learners in this school perform well in national examinations"; M = 3.10). The lowest-rated item was E2 ("The school registers high pass rates in literacy"; M = 2.90). Teachers gave a mean of 3.05, and SMC members 2.96, and the difference was not statistically significant (Section 4.8). The two lowest-rated items concerned the pass rates in literacy (E2) and the pupils' numeracy and problem-solving skills (E8), the two areas that two of the five head teachers also identified as weak. Item E1, "Learners in this school perform well in national examinations", was rated M = 3.10, that is, close to "not sure". The respondents were thus neither confident nor critical about their schools' results.

Interview Findings

Description of the PLE trend. The head teachers described the results in cautious terms. Four of the five (HT01, HT02, HT04, HT05) called them mixed, variable, or varying between years or cohorts. HT01 said the results are "mixed, with some improvement in selected subjects but continuing weaknesses in literacy and numeracy", and HT02 said that "PLE outcomes have varied from year to year". HT03 was more direct, describing performance as "below the school's desired level". HT04 referred to "gradual challenges in maintaining strong divisions", and HT05 to "concerns about the proportion reaching the stronger divisions". Two head teachers (HT01, HT03) named literacy and numeracy as weak, and two (HT04, HT05) were concerned about the higher divisions. All five linked the results to attendance, together with teacher continuity and preparation, materials, time for revision, and home support. None of the five described a steady fall in results year after year, although the records below show that every indicator moved in the same direction in each of the five years.

Documentary Findings

Table 5: PLE Performance of the Five Schools Combined, 2021–2025

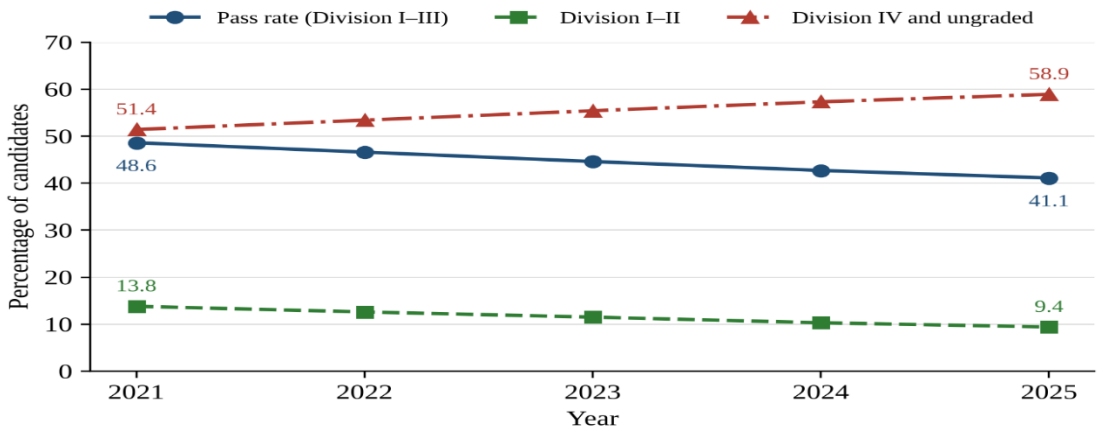
Indicator	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Change, 2021 to 2025
Candidates	420	435	448	461	475	+55
Division I–II (%)	13.8	12.6	11.5	10.3	9.4	-4.4
Division III (%)	34.8	34.0	33.1	32.4	31.7	-3.1
Division IV and ungraded (%)	51.4	53.4	55.4	57.3	58.9	+7.5
Pass rate, Division I–III (%)	48.6	46.6	44.6	42.7	41.1	-7.5
Mean aggregate	28.4	29.1	29.8	30.5	31.2	+2.8
Candidates passing (approximate)	204	203	200	197	195	-9

Source: *School records and PLE results (2026); divisions combined and approximate passes calculated.*

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Table 5 shows a consistent decline. The pass rate fell from 48.6% in 2021 to 41.1% in 2025, a fall of 7.5 percentage points or about 15% of the 2021 figure. The share of candidates in Divisions I and II fell from 13.8% to 9.4%, while the share in Division IV, or ungraded, rose from 51.4% to 58.9%. The mean aggregate rose from 28.4 to 31.2, which is a deterioration because a lower aggregate is better. The number of candidates grew from 420 to 475 (13.1%), but the approximate number passing fell from about 204 to about 195, so the schools presented more pupils each year and passed fewer.

Figure 1: PLE pass rate and division distribution of the five schools combined, 2021–2025



Source: *School records and PLE results (2026).*

Table 6: Linear Trend of the PLE Indicators, 2021–2025

Indicator	Change per year	r with year	Sig.
Pass rate, Division I–III (%)	-1.89 percentage points	−.999	< .001
Division I (%)	-0.47 percentage points	−.998	< .001
Division II (%)	-0.64 percentage points	−.999	< .001
Division IV (%)	+1.11 percentage points	.998	< .001
Ungraded (%)	+0.78 percentage points	.985	.002
Mean aggregate	+0.70 points	1.000	< .001

Source: *School records and PLE results (2026); linear regression of each indicator on year (5 data points).*

Table 6 fits a straight line to each indicator. The pass rate fell by 1.89 percentage points a year on average, and the mean aggregate rose by 0.70 a year. The coefficients are very close to −1 or +1 because the series move in almost a straight line, but they rest on only five yearly totals for the five schools combined and should be read as a description of the trend and not as a test of cause. The other documents examined gave a more qualitative picture.

Table 7: Documents on Academic Performance Reviewed

No.	Document	Availability	Documentary finding
1	PLE results 2021–2025	Yes	PLE pass rate declined from 48.6% in 2021 to 41.1% in 2025 in the supplied aggregate table; Div I–II fell from 13.8% to 9.4%.
2	Continuous assessment records	Yes	Records are described as available, but performance varies by subject and term.
4	Academic reports and performance analysis	Yes	Reports identify literacy and numeracy as priority areas for improvement.
17	External assessment reports	Yes	External results support comparison of progress over time.

Source: *Document review (2026).*

The PLE results, continuous assessment records, academic reports and external assessment reports were all available. Their findings agree with one another: performance varies by subject and term, literacy and numeracy are the priority areas for improvement, and external results make comparison over time possible. End-of-term examination results by school were not obtained in a form that could be analysed, so the documentary measure of performance is the PLE series.

Comparison of the Sources

Table 8: Summary of Evidence on Academic Performance

Source of evidence	What it showed
Questionnaire	Moderate rating (M = 3.02); respondents were close to "not sure" that pupils perform well, with literacy and numeracy items lowest.
Interviews	Four of 5 head teachers described results as mixed or variable; two named literacy and numeracy as weak, and two were concerned about the higher divisions.
Document review	Every PLE indicator worsened each year from 2021 to 2025: the pass rate fell from 48.6% to 41.1% and Division I–II from 13.8% to 9.4%.
Overall	The sources agree on the weak areas but not on the severity. The respondents and head teachers were more favourable than the records, which show a sustained decline.

Source: *Primary data and document review (2026).*

The three sources are consistent about where the weaknesses lie but differ in how serious they judge them to be. Teachers and SMC members rated performance as moderate, the head teachers called it variable, and the records show a decline in every year. This suggests that people inside the schools, who see the daily effort being made, perceive performance more favourably than the examination results justify. The next three sections examine how far each type of school management practice is related to this performance.

Student Management Practices and Academic Performance

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for Student Management Practices (n = 105)

No.	Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
B1	The school has clear rules that guide student behavior.	3.24	1.02	Moderate
B2	School rules are consistently enforced by administrators.	3.30	0.92	Moderate
B3	Students are well supervised during school hours.	3.30	0.90	Moderate
B4	The school effectively manages student attendance.	3.33	0.83	Moderate
B5	Absenteeism is regularly monitored and addressed.	3.30	1.06	Moderate
B6	Guidance and counseling services are available to learners.	3.32	0.97	Moderate
B7	Teachers provide adequate support to learners facing academic challenges.	3.30	0.92	Moderate
B8	The school encourages positive behavior among learners.	3.44	1.02	High
B9	Co-curricular activities are well organized in the school.	3.36	0.91	Moderate
B10	Learners are actively involved in school decision-making where appropriate.	3.28	0.93	Moderate
B11	Communication between teachers and learners is effective.	3.27	1.01	Moderate
B12	The school environment promotes positive learner behavior.	3.24	1.00	Moderate
	Overall mean for student management practices	3.31	0.56	Moderate

Source: *Primary data (2026).*

The overall mean score for student management practices was M = 3.31, SD = 0.56, which is moderate on the interpretation guide. Only 42.7% of the responses to the items in this section were "agree" or "strongly agree", 38.0% were "not sure," and 19.3% were "disagree" or "strongly disagree". Item means lay in a narrow band, from 3.24 to 3.44, so no single aspect stood out. The highest-rated item was B8 ("The school encourages positive behavior among learners"; M = 3.44). The lowest-rated items were B1 ("The school has clear rules that guide student behavior") and B12 ("The school environment promotes positive learner behavior"), which were tied (M = 3.24 each). This was the highest-rated of the three management practices. Teachers (M = 3.29) and SMC members (M = 3.34) rated it similarly.

Interview Findings

Management of discipline. All five head teachers described discipline as managed through school rules, class teachers, and parents. HT02 explained that "Rules are explained during assemblies and reinforced by class teachers", and HT05 said that "School rules are shared with learners and parents". Two (HT02, HT04) added that good conduct is rewarded: HT02 said that "Positive conduct is praised" and

HT04 that "Positive reinforcement is used alongside corrective measures". Repeated cases go to the leadership of the school and to parents (HT01, HT02, HT05). Consistency was the weak point. HT01 said "consistency varies when staffing is limited", and HT03 said that "Enforcement can be inconsistent when staff is covering several responsibilities".

Attendance and participation. All five head teachers described daily registers or class checks, and all five described contact with parents or homes when pupils are repeatedly absent. HT04 said that "Teachers record attendance each day and contact families when pupils miss school repeatedly". HT05 added that "follow-up works best when school and home communicate early". Four of the five (HT01, HT02, HT03, HT04) said follow-up is limited by distance, transport, or time. HT02 said that "transport and staff time are constraints", and HT03 linked absence to "illness, household responsibilities or long distances to school".

Guidance and counselling. In all five schools, guidance was provided by class, designated, or trusted teachers alongside their teaching. HT01 said it "helps with minor concerns, but formal counselling time and specialist training are limited". Four (HT01, HT03, HT04, HT05) said there is no protected time, private space, or formal schedule for it, and three (HT01, HT03, HT05) asked for training. HT03 said the school "would benefit from additional training and a private space for discussions", and HT05 said that "More training and protected time would improve support for learners with complex concerns". HT04 offered a positive note, that learners "appear more willing to seek help when staff is approachable".

Documentary Findings

Table 10: Documents Reviewed on Student Management

No.	Document	Availability	Documentary finding
5	Pupils' attendance registers	Yes	Attendance monitoring is present; repeated absence requires parent follow-up.
8	School policies and rules/regulations	Yes	Rules are reported available; consistent enforcement is a key implementation issue.
9	Guidance and counselling records	Partly available	Formal documentation is limited because much guidance is informal.

Source: *Document review (2026).*

Pupils' attendance registers and school rules and regulations were available in full, and guidance and counselling records were only partly available. This matches the interviews: attendance is recorded daily, and discipline rules exist, but the finding that "consistent enforcement is a key implementation issue" and the limited documentation of guidance, much of which is informal, mirror what head teachers said about uneven enforcement and unscheduled counselling.

Relationship between Student Management Practices and Academic Performance

Table 11: Correlation between Student Management Practices and Academic Performance

Respondents	n	R	Sig. (2-tailed)	Strength (Cohen, 1988)
All respondents	105	.272	.005	Small to medium, positive
Teachers	75	.260	.024	Small to medium, positive
SMC members	30	.309	.097	Medium, positive (not significant)

Source: *Primary data (2026).*

Table 12 shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between student management practices and academic performance ($r = .272$, $p = .005$, $n = 105$). By the guidance of Cohen (1988), the relationship is small to medium: schools where respondents rated discipline, attendance, and guidance more favorably were also rated higher on academic performance, but student management accounts for only about 7% of the variation in performance scores. The relationship was significant among teachers ($r = .260$, $p = .024$) and of similar size, but not significant among the 30 SMC members ($r = .309$, $p = .097$), a group that is too small to detect a coefficient of that size reliably. Therefore, student management practices are positively but modestly related to academic performance in the selected UPE schools.

Comparison of the Sources

Table 12: Summary of Evidence on Student Management Practices

Source of evidence	What it showed
Questionnaire	Moderate rating ($M = 3.31$), the highest of the three practices; small to medium positive correlation with performance ($r = .272$).
Interviews	Rules, class teachers, and parents are used in all 5 schools; four of 5 said attendance follow-up is limited by distance or time, and four of 5 said guidance has no protected time or space.
Document review	Attendance registers and school rules available; guidance and counselling records only partly available.
Overall	Student management is practised in a routine way and was rated moderately. Its weak points are consistency of enforcement and the lack of structured counselling. Its association with performance is positive and modest.

Source: *Primary data and document review (2026).*

Discussion

Student Management Practices and Academic Performance

Student management practices were rated moderate (M = 3.31). They were positively and significantly correlated with academic performance (r = .272, p = .005). All five head teachers described discipline through rules, class teachers, parents, and daily attendance registers. Enforcement was uneven in two schools, attendance follow-up was limited in four, and counselling had no protected time in four. The positive correlation between student management and academic performance is consistent in direction with the literature. Mpiti et al. (2025) reported that schools with clear rules and consistent enforcement record better academic outcomes, and Uwase (2025) reported that schools that monitor and address absenteeism experience improved learner outcomes. The relationship in this study was the weakest of the three, and it was not significant once the other practices were held constant. The interviews suggest why. Rules and registers exist in every school, so these practices vary little between respondents and cannot discriminate strongly between better and worse performance, and the weaknesses the head teachers described (uneven enforcement, limited follow-up, unscheduled counselling) are in the quality of implementation. The small standalone effect should not be read as meaning that discipline and attendance do not matter. It indicates that, among these five similar schools, student management operated together with academic and financial management, as Systems Theory would expect of interdependent subsystems (Bertalanffy, 1968).

Conclusion

Student management practices are positively but modestly related to academic performance in the selected UPE schools in Keri Town Council. Rules, class teachers, parents, and registers are in place, but uneven enforcement, limited follow-up of absence, and unstructured counselling reduce their effect.

Limitation

The findings should be read in the light of the following limitations. The questionnaire data were perceptions collected at one point in time, so the correlations show association and not cause. The predictors and the dependent variable were rated by the same respondents, which can inflate relationships. The models explained about a quarter of the variance in performance ratings. The PLE results were available only for the five schools combined and for five years, so the management ratings could not be linked to recorded results school by school. End-of-term results were not analysed. Only five head teachers were interviewed, so the interview counts are descriptive. The study did not measure other known influences on performance such as home background, class size and pupil attendance rates.

Recommendation

Schools should strengthen early communication with parents on absenteeism, and the district should support schools with a small allocation for follow-up visits. Three head teachers asked for stronger parent communication, and four said that distance, transport, and time limited follow-up.

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List of abbreviations

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance
CVI: Content Validity Index
MoES: Ministry of Education and Sports
PLE: Primary Leaving Examination
SD: Standard Deviation
SMC: School Management Committee
SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNEB: Uganda National Examinations Board
UPE: Universal Primary Education

Informed Consent.

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their inclusion in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, procedures involved, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

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Conflict of interest.

There is no conflict of interest.

Availability of data.

Data used in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Authors contribution.

BA conceptualized the study, developed the methodology, carried out the investigation, and wrote the original draft.
HN: supervision, validation, writing- review and editing
EB: supervision, validation, writing- review and editing.
All authors approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for the work.

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