

Challenges faced by school boards in managing students' discipline in public secondary schools: A case of Tabora Region, Tanzania

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Abstract

This study explored the challenges faced by school boards in managing student discipline in public secondary schools in Tabora Region, focusing on Nzega District and Nzega Town Council. Guided by Social Control Theory, the study adopted an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative case study design. Data were collected from 58 participants, including school board members, heads of schools, parents, student leaders, and District Secondary Education Officers. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and documentary review, and analyzed through thematic analysis. The Findings revealed that school boards encounter multiple challenges, including limited financial resources, low parental cooperation, conflicts among board members, inadequate training and technical capacity, and cultural practices that conflict with school rules. These challenges weaken board authority, delay decision-making, and reduce consistency in enforcing discipline, limiting their ability to maintain safe and orderly learning environments. The study recommends allocating dedicated funds, enhancing parental involvement, providing regular capacity-building programs, promoting consensus-building among board members, and collaborating with community leaders to harmonize school rules with local cultural expectations.

Keywords: school boards, student discipline, school governance, educational management, discipline management

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1. Introduction

The school board has been recognised for playing a significant role in students' discipline management through implementing the disciplinary policy, supervising students' discipline and promoting supportive learning environments worldwide (Lekalakala, 2007; Kobello, Salema, & Mashingia, 2022). The school boards are fundamental governance bodies in education systems that provide guidance and accountability in managing student behaviour and enforcing standards of conduct (Dlamini, 2022). School discipline is a systematic framework of rules and behavioural standards designed to regulate student conduct, ensuring a safe, orderly, and conducive environment for teaching and learning (Hanna, 2025). In many countries the school board tasked us with laws to manage and regulate the students' discipline (Liguluka & Onyango, 2020). However, despite these school board functions, many education systems continue to report the disciplinary problems that compromise learning, school climate and the overall performance (Hanna, 2025).

In many developed countries, school boards are strategically positioned to interpret policies and monitor the disciplinary practices across schools (Baxter, 2020). For example, in the United Kingdom, the management of students' discipline is one of the roles of school boards, which outline expectations for students' conduct, sanctions, and rewards (Kobello Salema & Mashingi, 2020). While in Canada, when serious indiscipline cases occur, the head of school recommends expulsion of the student to the school board, which then makes the final decision (Valdebenito et al., 2018). However, despite the mandate of the school board in these countries, in managing discipline, disciplinary cases such as truancy, disrespect, classroom violence, bullying, and substance abuse have been widely documented (Jinot, 2021). These issues indicate the inadequate discipline management among the school board, which can disrupt the teaching and learning process and adversely affect students' academic performance.

1.1 Regional Perspectives on School Governance

In Sub Saharan Africa, school governance committees often referred to as school boards or councils have been established to strengthen accountability and community participation in school management, including student discipline (Mifsud & Wilkins, 2025). Countries such as South Africa, Uganda, and Nigeria have formalised school boards with specific responsibilities for overseeing student behaviour and implementing disciplinary frameworks (Akyeampong & Mensah, 2018). For instance, in South Africa, School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are mandated to manage school finances, supervise student discipline, and participate in staffing decisions (Wyk, 2004). In Uganda, boards oversee student conduct to ensure adherence to behavioural standards (Paul, 2020), while in Nigeria, boards are responsible for maintaining discipline to support academic performance (Ayeni & Bamire, 2022). Despite these structures, studies indicate that indiscipline remains a significant challenge. Secondary students in several African countries continue to experience physical violence, absenteeism, and classroom disruptions, and events such as school fires have been reported between 2016 and 2022 (CJCP, 2022, Waithaka, 2017; Kagoiya & Kagema, 2018).

The Situation in Tanzania and Tabora - In Tanzania, school boards were formally institutionalised through Government Notice No. 304 of 2002, marking an important step towards decentralised school governance (Naidoo, 2002; URT, 2002). These boards have multiple mandates, including strategic planning, resource allocation and oversight of discipline (URT, 2002; Mlugu, 2015). However, persistent student indiscipline continues to undermine learning and academic outcomes in many public secondary schools (Tumbo & Omer Solomon, 2024). Despite the mandate of school boards to oversee and manage student discipline, dropout rates associated with indiscipline remain a significant concern in regions such as Tabora, particularly in Nzega District (Sumbizi, 2025).

Forms of indiscipline, including truancy, engagement in sexual relationships, and drug abuse, continue to pose serious challenges within schools (Tabora Regional Education Office [REO], 2022). These behavioural issues are often linked to factors such as inadequate school resources and limited parental guidance, which contribute to students disengaging from schooling and eventually dropping out (Sumbizi, 2025). Therefore, due to these gaps, the call for conducting another study on the challenges faced by the school boards in managing student discipline in Tabora is essential to address the knowledge gap existing within the literature.

2. Theoretical Literature Review

This study is guided by Social Control Theory (Hirschi, 1969), which explains that individuals are less likely to engage in deviant behaviour when they have strong social bonds, namely attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. In school settings, these bonds are reflected in students' relationships with teachers, commitment to academic goals, participation in school activities, and respect for school rules. The theory is directly relevant to this study as it explains how school boards influence student discipline through their governance roles. By establishing clear rules, ensuring fair enforcement, and supporting student engagement, school boards contribute to strengthening these social bonds. For example, consistent disciplinary practices enhance students' belief in school rules, while supportive policies and co-curricular activities promote attachment and involvement. However, when school boards face challenges such as limited resources, inadequate training, or weak enforcement of policies, these social bonds may weaken, leading to increased indiscipline such as truancy, absenteeism, and misconduct. Therefore, the theory helps to explain how the challenges faced by school boards can directly affect their effectiveness in managing student discipline in public secondary schools.

3. Methodology

This section presents the methodological procedures employed in conducting the study. It describes the research philosophy, approach, design, study area, target population, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. The chapter explains how data were collected and analysed to address the research objectives on the challenges faced by school boards in managing student discipline.

This study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm, which views reality as socially constructed and best understood through individuals' experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2013). This philosophy was appropriate because the study sought to explore how school boards manage student discipline within their specific school contexts. Interpretivism guided the use of qualitative methods, particularly interviews, to capture participants' lived experiences and insights (Frechette, et al, 2020). Interpretivism guided the use of qualitative methods, particularly interviews, to capture participants' lived experiences and insights. It enabled the researcher to understand the contextual factors and obstacles that influence how school boards confront discipline issues in public secondary schools.

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the challenges faced by school boards in managing student discipline in public secondary schools (Regmi, 2024). This approach was appropriate because it focused on participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours rather than numerical measurement, allowing for an in-depth understanding of complex social processes. Through engaging school board members, chairpersons, heads of schools, and teachers, the study examined what challenges exist, why they occur, and how they affect discipline management (Dodgson, 2017). The qualitative method enabled the researcher to capture rich, contextual insights into factors such as resource limitations, training gaps, and policy implementation difficulties, providing a deeper understanding of the barriers to effective student discipline (Tisdell, Merriam & Stuckey-Peyrot, 2025).

This study used a case study design to explore the challenges faced by school boards in managing student discipline within real-life settings (Yin, 2018; Simons, 2009). The design enabled a detailed understanding of how discipline is managed and how contextual factors influence school board effectiveness in both urban and rural schools. Nzega District and Nzega Town Council were selected as a single case because official education reports

identify them as areas with high incidences of student indiscipline, such as truancy, substance misuse, and behavioural disruptions, which have contributed to increased dropout rates (Sumbizi, 2025). Using Nzega as a case enabled the researcher to investigate what specific challenges occur in school board practice, how these challenges unfold in both urban and rural schools, and why they persist despite existing policies. The district represents a bounded system with observable interactions between governance structures, school leadership, and contextual factors, making it suitable for an in-depth, contextualised study (Yin, 2018)

The study was conducted in Nzega Town Council and Nzega District Council in Tabora Region. These areas were selected because official education statistics and reports indicate persistently high levels of student indiscipline, including truancy, substance abuse, and behavioural misconduct, which have contributed to elevated school dropout rates and poor academic performance (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2023; Tabora Regional Education Office, 2022). The inclusion of both councils enabled a comparison between urban and rural contexts, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of how school boards manage discipline across different socio educational environments (URT, 2023).

The target population for this study includes school board members, heads of public secondary schools, parents, student leaders, and District Secondary Education Officers (DSEOs) from Nzega Town Council and Nzega District Council in Tabora Region. Each group is included deliberately because of its direct involvement or influence on student discipline, ensuring comprehensive and reliable data for understanding its management in both urban and rural public secondary schools in Nzega. Heads of schools oversee daily operations and implement discipline policies; school board members formulate and approve school rules; parents advise and collaborate with teachers on student discipline; student leaders provide learners' perspectives; and DSEOs supervise schools to ensure compliance with education and discipline standards. Under this study, the population consists of 2 DSEOs, 8 heads of public secondary schools, 72 school board members, 1,842 students, and an estimated 500 parents, making a total of 2,424 individuals. Population data were obtained from official sources, including the District Education Office, school records, and lists of school board members provided by the respective councils.

The sample size for this study were 40 participants, including 2 District Secondary Education Officers, 8 heads of schools, 16 school board members and 16 parents. Purposive sampling employed to deliberately select participants based on their direct involvement in managing student discipline. In qualitative research, sample size is primarily determined by the concept of data saturation, the point at which no new themes or insights emerge (Hennink, 2022). Factors such as the study purpose, research design, nature of the objectives, and diversity of participants also influence the adequacy of the sample size (Daniël, 2022). Therefore, the sample of 58 participants is sufficient to provide comprehensive, credible, and manageable data for understanding school board practices in managing student discipline.

The study area was stratified into Nzega Town Council and Nzega District Council in Tabora Region to capture perspectives from both urban and rural schools. Four public secondary schools from each council were purposively selected based on high incidences of student indiscipline, giving a total of eight schools. Within each school, the head of school and two school board members actively involved in discipline, along with the school board chairperson, were purposively selected. At the district level, one District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO) from each council participated, resulting in a total sample of 58 participants. This multi-stage purposive sampling ensured the inclusion of information-rich participants, allowing an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by school boards in managing student discipline across diverse school contexts.

The study employed triangulation methods to collect qualitative data, combining semi-structured interviews and documentary reviews to ensure comprehensive and reliable insights. Semi-structured interviews, guided by open-ended questions, were conducted with school board members, heads of schools, school board chairpersons, and District Secondary Education Officers to explore their perceptions, strategies, and practices in managing student discipline. The interviews allowed for detailed, face-to-face discussions, with opportunities for probing and clarification, and lasted 30–50 minutes depending on data saturation. Documentary review complemented the

interviews by examining minutes of school board meetings, school rules and regulations, and disciplinary records, providing stable, non-reactive evidence of institutional practices (Bowen, 2022). This combined approach enabled the researcher to capture rich, contextualized data on how school boards address discipline challenges while validating findings across multiple sources.

The study employed thematic analysis to examine qualitative data, following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013). The researcher first familiarized themselves with the data by reading transcripts and documents multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the content. Meaningful units of text related to the research questions were then identified and coded. These initial codes were grouped into broader themes that captured recurring patterns and concepts across the data. Themes were reviewed to ensure they accurately reflected the data and were interpreted in relation to the study's conceptual framework and the Social Control Theory. Findings are presented with supporting quotations from participants to illustrate the identified themes. Triangulation of multiple data sources enhanced credibility by validating findings through convergence of evidence, ensuring a comprehensive and trustworthy analysis of school board practices in managing student discipline.

Trustworthiness in this study ensures that the qualitative findings are accurate, credible, and meaningful for other researchers (Ahmed, 2024; Adler, 2022). It will be established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility will be enhanced by collecting data from multiple sources, including school board members, heads of schools, teachers, and district education officers, capturing diverse perspectives. Member checking and reflexive journaling will document participants' feedback and researcher reflections, while triangulation of interviews and documentary reviews, along with peer debriefing, will ensure the findings genuinely reflect participants' experiences (Adler, 2022). Transferability will be supported by providing detailed descriptions of the study context, participants, and procedures, allowing readers to assess applicability to similar settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability, which addresses consistency and transparency, will be ensured through thorough documentation of all research steps, including participant selection, data collection, and analysis, with regular supervisory review to confirm systematic application of methods (Nowell et al., 2017). Confirmability will be achieved by grounding findings in data, using structured tools, reflexive journaling, direct participant quotations, and documentary evidence, while seeking peer and expert feedback to minimize bias and validate interpretations (Ahmed, 2024).

Before embarking on the data collection process, the researcher asked official permission from relevant authorities to ensure that the process is carried out procedurally and ethically. To ensure that ethical issues are observed in this study, the researcher followed the procedures to advocate the rights of the all participants by observing the protocol and confidentiality (Saunders et al, 2018). First, the researcher was seeking research permit from responsible authorities such as letters of permission from the Vice Chancellor at the Open University of Tanzania. Second, the researcher was seeking for participant informed consent to participate in the study. The participants were informed on the purposes of the study and their rights to participate or withdraw at any point in the research process without notification. Finally, the researcher ensured confidentiality and privacy of the participants' identities. The information collected was treated confidentially and used for research purposes only (by observing anonymity by using alphabetic letters).

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study, beginning with the demographics of the respondents and then the analysis of the data from the field

4.1 Demographic Information

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the 58 participants involved in this study. The information provides contextual understanding of participants' backgrounds relevant to examining challenges faced by school boards in managing student discipline in public secondary schools in Nzega. Variables considered

included sex, age, education level, and work experience, as summarised in Table 1

Table 1
Demographic Information of Study Participants (N = 58)

Variable	Category	n	%
Sex	Male	34	58.6
	Female	24	41.4
	Total	58	100.0
Age Group	10–18 years (Students)	16	27.6
	35–44 years	24	41.4
	45–54 years	12	20.7
	55 years and above	6	10.3
	Total	58	100.0
Education Level	Primary education (Parents)	10	17.2
	Secondary education (Parents)	3	5.2
	Certificate/Diploma (Parents)	3	5.2
	Bachelor's degree	24	41.4
	Master's degree	3	5.2
	Secondary education (Students)	16	27.6
	Total	58	100.0
Work Experience	1–5 years	9	15.5
	6–10 years	14	24.1
	11–15 years	17	29.3
	16–20 years	10	17.2
	Over 20 years	8	13.8
	Total	58	100.0

The findings of the study revealed that Male participants accounted for 34 (58.6%) and female participants 24 (41.4%), reflecting the gender distribution in school leadership, which is relevant because gender can influence perceptions and decisions in managing student discipline. Most participants (41.4%) fell in the 35–44 years age group, followed by 20.7% aged 45–54 years, representing mid-career and experienced school leaders whose perspectives are crucial for understanding discipline management. Regarding education, 41.4% held a bachelor's degree, while 27.6% had secondary education, showing that most participants possess the knowledge and skills for implementing and supervising disciplinary policies, while those with lower education provide insights into practical challenges. In terms of work experience, 29.3% had 11–15 years, highlighting substantial exposure to school leadership and disciplinary practices, while others with over 20 years contribute perspectives from long-term governance experience, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of factors affecting student discipline in public secondary schools.

4.2 Challenges Facing School Boards in Managing Student Discipline

This study sought to explore the challenges facing school boards in managing students' discipline in public secondary schools in the Tabora Region. The findings revealed that school boards encounter various obstacles in executing their disciplinary roles, including financial limitations, inadequate training, social and cultural barriers, and structural constraints within the school system.

Limited Financial Resources - The results of the study revealed that limited financial resources hindered the effectiveness of the school board in managing student discipline in public secondary schools in the Tabora region. The participants suggested that inadequate funds are limiting the key operations of the school board, including transport for follow-up and meeting attendance, allowances for board members, and the provision of welfare support like meals for students. The participants acknowledge that the financial limitation has directly affected the school board's ability to implement disciplinary strategies effectively. As a result, even when disciplinary measures

were identified as necessary, the lack of resources restricted timely interventions. The district education officer had shared the following

Many schools report that school boards are unable to fully carry out their disciplinary roles due to financial constraints. Without sufficient funding for allowances, transport, and welfare programs, their capacity to enforce rules, support students, and maintain overall school discipline is significantly reduced (Semi-structured interview, District Education Officer, November 2025)

The head teacher from school E shared the following

Financial challenges remain a critical issue, as the school lacks a dedicated budget to cover all school board expenses, including meetings, allowances, and transport. This situation often results in delays in implementing disciplinary actions, reducing the board's effectiveness in maintaining proper school discipline (Semi-structured interview, Head of School E, November 2025).

The school board member added that

Our limited budget makes it difficult for the school board to implement their duties effectively. For example, you may have an indisciplinary case that needs immediate intervention, but due to the lack of finances, there is no way you can summon them to come without having their allowance since there is no financial budget available for them from the school capitation (Semi-structured interview, School Board Member from school B, November 2025).

Based on the participants' quotes, the findings of the study indicate that the financial constraints are a critical issue that limits the school board's abilities to execute their roles efficiently and improve students' discipline in public primary schools in the Tabora Region. The findings of the study resonated with Tabu and Lekule (2022) in Mbeya, Tanzania, who evidenced that the school board faced a lack of finances that affected the effectiveness of school boards due to the budget. The study findings were also confirmed by Mlimbi (2018) in Rukwa, who suggested that school boards face various challenges, including financial challenges, poor nomination of board members by heads of schools, and inadequate skills in management and administration. Furthermore Mutinda (2015) suggested that inadequate staff personnel; inadequate school finances; misappropriations of funds, insufficient physical facilities; poor performance in national examinations; lack of support from the local community are the common challenges facing the school board member in executing their duties.

Low Parental Cooperation - The findings of the study revealed that poor parental cooperation was identified as a key challenge management in public secondary schools in the Tabora Region. The results reveal that low parental cooperation hinders the school board from ensuring effective discipline. Many participants reported little parental responsiveness to school board invitations, which suggests low cooperation between parents and the school board. The participants claim that such disengagement manifested in cases where parents did not attend school processes, indicates a lack of clarity on the part of parents over what their roles should be in the schools or a mutual perception that responsibilities for managing students' misbehavior are shared across families and the school cooperation. The head of the school from school C remarked that

A main challenge we face in addressing student discipline is the limited cooperation from parents. In many instances, parents don't respond to invitations from the school, even when their children are involved in significant discipline issues. This makes it difficult to arrive at the solutions, as effective discipline truly depends on a joint effort between the school and the home (semi-structured interview, Head of School A, November 2025).

The head of the school from school E commented.

"We frequently find ourselves inviting parents to discuss their children's inappropriate behavior, yet some fail to attend. This situation often suggests that certain parents view student discipline as

solely the school's responsibility, which undermines collaborative efforts to correct behavior and maintain proper order (Semi-structured interview, Head of School E, November 2025).

From the participants' sentiments, the findings of the study imply that there is a need for a collaborative approach to managing students' discipline, which should involve joint responsibility between the school and students' parents. The findings of the study align with Msacky, Nyanzira, and Bujiku (2024), in Tanzania, who suggested that parents' involvement in discipline management is limited and complicated by a lack of cooperation, communication, and trust between parents and school administration. The findings also comply with Guo and Zhao (2025), who noted that the low parental involvement in students' discipline issues is a critical challenge that the school faces. The findings of the study contradict the Education and Training Policy of 2014, revised in 2023, which recognises the role of parental involvement as key stakeholders in supporting student welfare, including discipline. Although this recognition, parents do not effectively attend the school meeting when they are invited, indicating the policy gap in practices (United Republic of Tanzania, 2023).

Conflicts among School Board Members - Conflicts among school board members were reported as a notable challenge affecting the school board in the management of student discipline in public secondary schools in the Tabora Region. The, a majority of the participants reported the lack of shared understanding among school board members during their meeting decision. The internal clashes frequently manifest when some disciplinary action takes place against the students of the school board member or political figures due to differing opinions on the most suitable actions for students involved in misconduct. In affirmation the head of the school B expressed the following

Conflicts among school board members often arise during disciplinary meetings, especially when decisions involve students who are related to board members or local leaders. In such cases, some members tend to defend the students instead of focusing on school regulations, which delays agreement and weakens disciplinary decisions. (Semi-structured interview, Head of School B, November 2025)

In adding the school board member added that

It is not always easy to reach consensus during board meetings. Some members have personal or political interests, particularly when a disciplinary case involves their children or influential people in the community. These differences in opinion create conflicts that slow down the decision-making process. (Semi-structured interview, School Board Member, November 2025)

In a similar suggestion the head of the school from school G shared that

There are situations where the school board fails to make timely disciplinary decisions because members disagree among themselves. This usually happens when disciplinary action is taken against students connected to board members or political figures, leading to prolonged debates instead of quick resolutions. (Semi-structured interview, Head Teacher, November 2025)

The findings of the study imply that a lack of unity within the school board weakened its authority and credibility, making it difficult to enforce agreed-upon rules consistently and weakening the board's ability to manage student discipline effectively. The findings resonate with Ndambuki (2016) in Kenya, who concluded that cases of indiscipline in school were linked to the conflict management style used and recommended that school management should adopt styles that generate minimal conflicts when dealing with student indiscipline. In addition, the findings are the same as Grissom (2010) in the USA suggested that the school boards that use more professional decision practices and whose members share a common vision for their work experience conflict at substantially lower rates. Also, whereas ideological heterogeneity among board members positively predicts conflict, contrary to expectations, racial diversity is associated with less division among board members.

Limited Capacity of School Board Members - The study findings revealed that limited capacity among school

board members was recommended as the challenge to effective management of student discipline in public secondary schools in the Tabora Region. The participants acknowledged that some board members lacked adequate training and skills in education management and disciplinary action. This issue facilitates the inability of certain members to analyse and evaluate disciplinary cases effectively, which sometimes leads to inappropriate or delayed decisions. Consequently, the limited capacity of board members hinders the effectiveness of the school board decisions due to a lack of clarity or failure to address the root causes of students' discipline. The head of the school from school D shared the following

Some school board members lack sufficient training or experience to handle disciplinary cases effectively. This limitation sometimes causes delays in decision-making, results in inconsistent or unclear outcomes, and reduces the board's ability to enforce rules, maintain discipline, and ensure a well-ordered learning environment (Semi-structured interview, Head of the school D November 2025)

In the same view the head of the school F shared the following

I have noticed that some board members struggle to interpret school rules or properly apply disciplinary procedures. This challenge affects the effectiveness of decisions made during meetings, weakens enforcement of school regulations, and can lead to inconsistent handling of student behavior and discipline issues (Semi-structured interview, Head the school F, November 2025)

From the head of the school participants, the findings of the study imply that the effectiveness of the school board depends on their technical knowledge of managing education and student discipline as well; without capacity building among the school board members, they will continue to struggle to interpret school regulations or apply disciplinary guidelines consistently. The results of the study concurred with Mshighati (2014), who conducted a study in Tanzania and revealed that board members often lack the knowledge and skills required, so accountability falls to the headmaster. Furthermore, the findings resonate with Nyambane (2025) in Kenya, who addressed that the school board members lack the technical skills in education management; hence, enhancing the skills and knowledge of SBM through capacity building is essential for effective school governance in Kenya. Similarly, Ibrahim and Orodho (2016) affirmed that most of the members of the school Board of Management lacked the requisite knowledge and skills to manage these institutions as a result of their low level of formal education

The results of the study contrast with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Education 2030 Agenda), which highlights the need for education systems to promote inclusive, equitable and quality education through strengthened governance and capacity building among educational leaders and stakeholders (UNESCO. 2015). Lack of knowledge and skills required; among the school board members, it indicates that the aim of the education framework is not yet fully achieved in the school governance.

Cultural Challenges - The study findings, show that the cultural challenges like traditional ceremony significantly limit the effectiveness of school boards in managing student discipline within public secondary schools in the Tabora Region. The findings suggested that some cultural practices and a lack of effective parental supervision limit the board's capacity to implement the disciplinary measures among the secondary school students. The participants claimed that some cultural norms occasionally within the region justify student misconduct, thereby complicating the consistent application of school regulations.

The head of the school from school B shared

The school board finds it challenging to consistently implement the school rules due to the fact that some parents believe cultural practices are acceptable in their traditions, such as engaging in traditional ceremonies, and they leave it entirely to the school to correct their children, (Semi-structured interview, Head of School B, November 2025).

The school board member from school G also commented

Cultural beliefs sometimes conflict with school rules. Some parents openly challenge our disciplinary decisions because they believe these measures go against their traditions or values. This creates tension, undermines school authority, and makes it difficult to enforce rules and maintain proper student discipline effectively (Semi-structured interview, School Board Member, School G, November 2025).

The participants' sentiments imply a significant implementation gap in school governance. While the school board may fulfil its duty by establishing formal disciplinary strategies, these policies often remain ineffective in practice because they clash with deeply rooted cultural norms and a lack of parental support. The findings of the study align with Werema (2023), conducted the study in Tanzania, supported that the family background, home environment, and weak parental involvement influence students' behaviour and complicate the management of discipline by school authorities. Similarly, the findings comply with the study of Nkwanga (2019), in Uganda, which found that poor parental guidance and inadequate home supervision contributed to disciplinary problems.

5. Conclusion

The study found that school boards in public secondary schools in the Tabora Region face a mix of challenges that make their work difficult. Even though they are meant to guide and manage school discipline, their efforts are often limited by a lack of funds, insufficient training, and disagreements among members. On top of this, the rules set by the schools sometimes clash with local cultural practices, which makes it harder for boards to enforce discipline consistently. These challenges weaken the boards' authority and make it more difficult to create a safe and well-organized learning environment for students.

Recommendations

- The government and school authorities should allocate dedicated funds to support school board operations, including allowances, transport, and welfare activities to ensure timely and effective disciplinary interventions.
- Schools should implement strategies to encourage parental participation in discipline management, such as regular communication, awareness campaigns, and workshops that clarify parents' roles.
- Regular training and professional development programs should be provided to school board members to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competence in education management and discipline handling.
- Schools should adopt clear protocols and consensus-building strategies to reduce conflicts among board members and ensure transparent and unified decision-making.
- School boards should collaborate with community leaders to harmonize disciplinary policies with cultural expectations, promoting shared understanding while maintaining the enforcement of school rules.

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