



From Storage to Disposal: Assessing Student Records Management Practices in Tabora Municipal Secondary Schools

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Abstract: *This study explored the practices and effectiveness of student records management in secondary schools in Tabora Municipality, Tanzania. A qualitative case study design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of heads of schools, records officers, and teachers. Data was collected from 36 participants through semi-structured interviews with heads of schools and records officers and focus group discussions with teachers from three purposively selected secondary schools. Thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's framework, was used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that schools maintained diverse student records, including attendance, disciplinary, academic performance, financial, transfer and leaving, health, and admission/enrolment records, primarily using paper-based systems organized by academic year, class level, or record type. Effective records management enhanced information accessibility, supported monitoring of academic progress and discipline, facilitated administrative decision-making, promoted accountability, ensured policy compliance, and preserved institutional memory. Challenges included limited training, inadequate storage facilities, unclear policies, and inconsistent record-keeping. The study concludes that proper student records management is vital for efficient school administration and recommends training, clear policies, digital systems, and regular audits to strengthen records management practices.*

Keywords: *Student records management, Secondary schools, Record retention, Administrative efficiency, Compliance*

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, records management within educational institutions has increasingly been recognized as a core administrative function that supports accountability, transparency, and decision-making in schools (Jonas, 2025). Student records, including attendance registers, examination results, academic performance logs, and admission data, are essential institutional resources that inform instructional planning,

monitor students' progress, and support compliance with educational regulations (Rita et al., 2025). Contemporary perspectives on records management emphasize the entire records lifecycle, from creation and storage, through retrieval and retention, to final disposal or archiving, as critical for ensuring records' authenticity, reliability, and accessibility (Assey & Mwinami, 2024).

Despite the acknowledged importance of systematic records management, empirical evidence suggests that

practices involving storage, maintenance, and disposal of student records in secondary schools are uneven, particularly in contexts with limited digital infrastructure and administrative capacity (Jonas, 2025; Rita et al., 2025). In East Africa, recent research in selected secondary schools in Kibuku District, Eastern Uganda, found that records management practices significantly influence both academic and administrative decisions, highlighting that weak systems and inconsistent practices hinder effective management and decision-making (Rita et al., 2025). The study recommended improvements such as the introduction of computerized formats and digitized systems to strengthen records accessibility and quality (Rita et al., 2025).

In Tanzania, there is growing interest in digital solutions to enhance student records management. A study by Jonas (2025) which evaluated cloud-based academic record management systems in Tanzanian secondary schools found that while cloud technologies have strong potential to improve efficiency, transparency, and decision-making regarding student records, their success is constrained by limited digital infrastructure, intermittent internet access, insufficient technical support, and gaps in user training (Jonas, 2025). These challenges suggest that, although digital platforms could address major inefficiencies associated with paper-based storage and retrieval, practical barriers remain across varied school environments (Jonas, 2025).

Similar patterns emerge from research in primary and secondary education. Assey and Mwinami (2024) study's, investigated academic records management practices among public primary schools in Chalinze District, Tanzania, the study's findings documented processes related to document capture, storage and retention, and the disposition of obsolete records, underscoring that heads of schools play pivotal roles in ensuring records' accuracy and completeness (Assey & Mwinami, 2024). The study concluded that records management is central to administrative effectiveness and recommended capacity building to strengthen these practices (Assey & Mwinami, 2024). Together with findings from Uganda, these studies imply that systematic records storage and disposal practices remain under-developed in many school contexts, often limited by infrastructural constraints and weak policy enforcement.

Conceptually, records management is grounded in the understanding that effective stewardship of information, from storage through disposal, enables educational institutions to operate transparently, respond to stakeholders' needs, and support long-term planning (Rita et al., 2025). When schools adopt robust storage, classification, retention, and disposition practices, they

strengthen both administrative accountability and service delivery, contributing to more reliable academic outcomes.

Generally, from the foregoing discussion, it is evident that while student records management is widely acknowledged as crucial for educational administration, there is limited empirical evidence documenting how records are stored, maintained, and disposed of in Tanzanian secondary schools, especially at the Municipal level. Existing studies emphasize digital adoption and administrative roles but fall short of systematically assessing practices across the full records lifecycle in Municipal contexts like Tabora. Consequently, this study seeks to bridge this gap by examining student records management practices in Tabora Municipal secondary schools, focusing on storage, maintenance, retrieval, retention, and disposal, to inform policy, practice, and further research on effective records stewardship in Tanzanian education.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Effective student records management is central to the administrative efficiency, accountability, and service delivery of secondary schools. Student records, ranging from admission forms and attendance registers to examination results and disciplinary reports, provide vital information for planning, monitoring, and decision-making. However, many schools face challenges in maintaining, storing, and disposing of records in line with established best practices (Assey & Mwinami, 2024; Rita et al., 2025).

In Tanzania, there is limited empirical evidence documenting the full lifecycle of student records, particularly storage, retention, retrieval, and disposal practices, in municipal secondary schools such as those in Tabora. Poor management of records may result in data loss, compromised confidentiality, delays in decision-making, and weakened institutional accountability. Consequently, understanding current practices is essential to improve administrative efficiency, safeguard student information, and support informed educational planning.

1.2 Research Objectives

Specifically, the study aimed:

- (i) To assess student records management practices in Tabora Municipal secondary schools
- (ii) To evaluate the effectiveness of student records management practices in Tabora Municipal secondary schools

2. Literature Review

2.1 Student Records Management Practices in Secondary Schools

In educational administration literature, student records management is widely viewed as a vital administrative function that supports effective planning, accountability, and decision-making in schools. Student records, such as admission files, attendance lists, academic results, and promotion records, constitute key institutional information that administrators rely on to monitor student progress, allocate resources, and comply with regulatory requirements (Ojo & Ayoko, 2024). Good records management practices encompass organizing, storing, retrieving, and preserving records over their lifecycle, ensuring that information is accurate, accessible, and protected from loss or damage.

Recent empirical studies illustrate the centrality of records management practices within secondary school contexts. For example, research conducted by Rinda (2025) in Fako Division, Southwest Region of Cameroon reported that student records management, from creating files and tracing records to facilitating ease of accessibility, played a significant, albeit weak, role in supporting administrative decision-making, signaling both the presence of formal practices and their limitations in effectiveness (Rinda, 2025). The study found that although policies and procedures existed for recordkeeping, regular updating, electronic storage, and designated staff responsibilities were weakly practiced, suggesting gaps in comprehensive implementation.

Similarly, evidence from Ilorin Metropolis secondary schools in Nigeria by Olaifa et al. (2024) underlines that principals' records-keeping practices are closely linked to school effectiveness, with organized documentation enhancing administrative tasks such as planning, reporting, and evaluation. While this study noted variation in practice quality among schools, it reinforced the argument that systematic records management is essential for effective school leadership and overall school performance. Investigations in Sokoto State, Nigeria by Isa et al. (2025) further highlight record planning, maintenance, and tracking as key tools for effective school management, with findings showing that these dimensions positively influence administrative processes in senior secondary schools. These practices facilitate consistent monitoring of student progress and support managerial functions, such as scheduling, performance review, and compliance with educational standards (Isa et al., 2025).

In the Tanzanian context, although still emerging, studies show a shift toward digital support for student records.

Research on cloud-based academic record information systems indicates that digital systems like CARIS improve the accuracy, storage reliability, accessibility, and privacy of student academic information in secondary schools, although challenges such as limited internet access, device availability, and user skills persist (Jonas, 2025). This suggests that the adoption of digital records management tools can strengthen practice quality where infrastructure allows.

Further qualitative research from Bombo Army Secondary School in Uganda documented how recordkeeping practices, such as registering, filing, classifying, storing, retrieving, and disposing of records, are conducted to support education service delivery, although challenges like inadequate storage space, insufficient ICT use, and limited funding constrain effectiveness (Rita et al., 2025). This study's findings underline recurring issues in school recordkeeping across African secondary education contexts, emphasizing the need for institutional capacity strengthening.

Despite the importance of student records management for administrative continuity and educational quality, existing literature also reveals significant gaps. Many studies highlight deficiencies such as poor storage facilities, weak updating practices, limited digitization, and inadequate training of school personnel, which undermine the overall effectiveness of records systems (Ojo & Ayoko, 2024; Rinda, 2025; Rita et al., 2024). These findings suggest that while foundational practices exist in various contexts, systematic and robust records management that aligns with international standards remains limited in many secondary schools, particularly where infrastructure and policy enforcement are weak.

In summary, literature on student records management practices consistently portrays them as essential for school planning, accountability, and effective administration. Scholars agree that structured processes, ranging from planning and storage to retrieval and disposal, enhance managerial functions, transparency, and educational service delivery. However, empirical evidence also points to widespread challenges, including weak digital adoption, limited capacity, and inadequate resources, underscoring the need for further research that assesses practices holistically and informs improvement strategies.

2.2 Effectiveness of Student Records Management Practices in Secondary Schools

Effective student records management is increasingly recognized as a key determinant of administrative efficiency, transparency, and decision-making in secondary schools. Contemporary research highlights

indicators such as accuracy, accessibility, timeliness, and security of records, which collectively reflect the effectiveness of records management practices. For instance, evidence from Nigerian secondary schools shows that well-structured records systems enhance school planning, staff accountability, and student monitoring, underscoring their role in supporting overall institutional performance (Olaifa et al., 2024). Similarly, studies in Tanzanian secondary schools indicate that the adoption of digital recordkeeping systems improves the reliability and accessibility of student information, thereby facilitating timely decision-making and reducing administrative errors (Jonas, 2025).

Effectiveness in records management is further linked to broader administrative and educational outcomes. Research in Uganda by Walusansa (2024) demonstrates that schools with systematic filing, retention, and retrieval practices experience fewer delays in reporting, better tracking of student progress, and improved compliance with regulatory requirements. In Sokoto State, Nigeria, structured record maintenance and monitoring practices positively influence managerial effectiveness and support instructional planning, reflecting how operational efficiency is enhanced when records are well managed (Isa et al., 2025). These findings suggest that the effectiveness of student records management can be assessed through measurable indicators such as ease of retrieval, completeness of data, timely reporting, and alignment with policy requirements.

Beyond operational efficiency, effective records management contributes to institutional transparency and accountability. Studies show that schools with comprehensive records systems are better able to protect sensitive student information, monitor attendance and performance trends, and provide evidence-based reports to stakeholders (Ojo & Ayoko, 2024; Rinda, 2025). Such systems enhance decision-making capacity and strengthen trust between school administrators, teachers, students, and parents, illustrating how administrative practices intersect with broader organizational and social outcomes.

However, despite documented benefits, challenges persist that undermine the effectiveness of student records management. Studies reveal that many schools face infrastructural limitations, limited staff training, and low adoption of digital systems, resulting in delayed reporting, incomplete records, and potential breaches of confidentiality (Jonas, 2025; Walusansa, 2024). These challenges indicate that while effectiveness can be significantly enhanced through structured systems and digitization, persistent constraints must be addressed to realize the full benefits of student records management.

Taken together, these studies highlight that effective student records management is not only a technical

administrative function but also a critical factor influencing operational efficiency, institutional accountability, and educational quality in secondary schools. Indicators such as accuracy, accessibility, timeliness, and security provide a multifaceted understanding of effectiveness, while challenges such as infrastructure gaps and limited capacity underscore areas for targeted improvement in school administration practices.

2.3 Theoretical Review

This research is informed by the Transformative Learning Theory proposed by Mezirow (2021). The theory posits that learning involves a process of critical reflection on one's assumptions, beliefs, and practices, leading to a shift in perspective and the ability to take informed action (Taylor & Cranton, 2021). Transformative learning emphasizes that individuals become agents of change when they are empowered to critically evaluate existing systems, question ineffective practices, and adopt improved strategies, thereby facilitating both personal and organizational transformation (Kitchenham, 2022). The theory further asserts that transformation extends beyond the individual level to influence institutional processes and outcomes when newly acquired knowledge and skills are applied to improve organizational effectiveness (Torres, 2023; UNESCO, 2022).

In the context of this study, Transformative Learning Theory provides a conceptual lens to examine how student records management practices influence the effectiveness and accountability of secondary school administration in Tabora Municipal. Specifically, the theory explains how school administrators' critical reflection on existing recordkeeping practices, storage, maintenance, retrieval, retention, and disposal, can lead to the adoption of more efficient and secure records management systems, thereby improving administrative decision-making and service delivery (Jonas, 2025; Rinda, 2025).

Moreover, the theory supports the understanding that sustainable improvements in school administration arise when individual capacity, through training, awareness, and skill development, is translated into collective organizational action. For instance, effective student records management can enhance data accessibility, reduce errors, safeguard confidentiality, and streamline reporting, which collectively strengthen institutional efficiency and accountability. This aligns directly with the study's objectives of assessing current practices and identifying challenges affecting records management, as well as proposing strategies for improvement.

Thus, Transformative Learning Theory serves as a foundation for analyzing the pathways through which critical reflection and informed action by school administrators can lead to enhanced student records

management, contributing to better planning, transparency, and overall educational service delivery in secondary schools.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study research design to explore student records management practices and the challenges faced by school administrators in Tabora Municipal secondary schools. The case study design was chosen for its flexibility, allowing participants to express themselves freely and enabling the collection of rich, detailed data from a relatively small sample. It also facilitates the exploration of complex administrative practices in real-life school contexts, providing an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions.

The total population of this study comprised of 36 participants, including 3 heads of schools, 3 records officers, and 30 teachers across the Municipal secondary schools. Three schools in Tabora Municipality were selected purposively based on their administrative structures and active engagement in student records management. Purposive sampling ensured that participants possessed direct experience and relevant knowledge about the management of student records.

Data collection tools included semi-structured interviews with heads of schools and records officers, aimed at capturing their professional experiences, practices, and challenges in managing student records. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with teachers to collect collective perspectives, with each FGD comprising ten teachers. The use of both interviews and FGDs allowed for triangulation of data, enhancing the reliability and depth of the findings. All sessions were conducted in settings convenient for participants, ensuring privacy and comfort to encourage open and honest discussions. With informed consent, all interviews and FGDs were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim to maintain data accuracy and completeness.

For data analysis, the study employed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-step procedure. This method enabled the identification, reporting, and interpretation of patterns (themes) within the data, providing a systematic approach to generate meaningful insights into student records management practices, challenges, and possible strategies for improvement. Thematic analysis was selected for its flexibility and suitability for exploring complex, context-specific qualitative data, allowing the researcher to understand the depth and diversity of participants' perspectives.

4. Results and Discussion

Several concerns and insights were raised by participants during interviews and focus group discussions, reflecting their experiences with student records management practices in Tabora Municipal secondary schools in Tanzania. The participants' perspectives on student records management practices in secondary schools and effectiveness of student records management practices in secondary schools are presented and analysed in the sections that follow.

4.1 Maintenance of Various Types of Student Records

The findings revealed that secondary schools in Tabora Municipality maintained a variety of student records as part of their routine administrative practices. Heads of schools and records officers reported that several categories of records were systematically kept supporting academic administration and student monitoring. These commonly maintained records included attendance registers, disciplinary records, academic performance records, financial records related to student fees, transfer and leaving certificates, health and medical records, and admission and enrolment records. Participants explained that maintaining these records helped schools track students' academic progress, monitor discipline, and provide accurate information when required by education authorities or parents.

Respondents further emphasized that proper documentation of student information facilitated effective school management and decision-making. They noted that organized records enabled school administrators to access historical student information for reporting, verification, and policy compliance. One head of school explained:

"In our school we keep several types of student records such as admission registers, attendance records, academic reports, and disciplinary files. These records help us monitor students' progress and maintain proper school administration" (Interview with Head of School B, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

Similarly, a records officer highlighted the importance of maintaining different categories of records for administrative efficiency:

"Student records such as health information, financial records, and transfer certificates are very important because they provide official evidence about a student's status in the school and

help when reports are required by the education authorities” (Interview with Records Officer 1, School A, 2025).

The quotation above indicates that the maintenance of diverse student records is a fundamental practice in secondary schools, supporting effective documentation, accountability, and the smooth functioning of school administrative processes.

4.2 The Use of Manual Record Systems

The findings revealed that student records were managed mainly using paper-based (manual) systems in the three schools visited by the researcher. Heads of schools disclosed that most student information such as admission registers, attendance records, academic reports, and disciplinary files were recorded and stored in physical files and registers kept in school offices. They further explained that the manual system has been used for many years because of limited digital infrastructure and lack of electronic record management systems in schools. However, they acknowledged that the manual approach sometimes makes it difficult to retrieve information quickly and exposed records to risks such as damage, loss, or misplacement. During the interview, one head of school was quoted as saying:

In our school we mostly keep student records in paper files and registers. Although this method helps us document students’ information, it sometimes becomes difficult to retrieve records quickly, especially when the files are many” (Interview with Head of School A, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

The quotation above indicates that student records in the surveyed schools were primarily maintained using manual paper-based systems, which helped schools document and store important student information. However, the statement also suggests that relying on manual records created challenges in retrieving information quickly and efficiently.

4.3 Categorization and Organization of Records

The findings revealed that students’ records were organized according to academic year, class level, or record type, which helped staff retrieve student information when needed for administrative or academic purposes. During the focus group discussions, participants were quoted as saying:

“In our school, student records are arranged according to the class level and academic year. This helps us to find the required information easily when preparing reports or checking students’ progress” (FGD with Teachers in School C, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

In a positive note, other teachers added:

“Records are usually filed according to their type, such as academic records, attendance registers, and disciplinary records. This organization makes it easier for teachers and administrators to access the needed information” (FGD with Teachers in School A, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

The quotations above indicate that organizing student records according to academic year, class level, and record type helped school staff retrieve information more easily and efficiently. Proper categorization therefore supported effective documentation, quick access to student information, and improved administrative operations in secondary schools.

4.4 Record Retention and Disposal Practices

The findings revealed that student records were retained for several years after students left school, depending on the type of record, and old records were disposed of through burning, archiving, or handing them over to relevant authorities. One head of school explained:

“In our school, student records are kept for several years even after students have completed their studies. When the records become old and are no longer needed, some are burned, while others are kept in storage or handed over to the relevant authorities” (Interview with Head of School C, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

The quotation above indicates that schools practice record retention for a certain period after students left school to ensure that important information remains available for reference and verification. It also suggests that different disposal methods such as burning, archiving, or transferring records to authorities were used when records were no longer required, reflecting existing procedures used by schools to manage outdated student records.

Regarding the effectiveness of student records management practices in secondary schools, participants provided the following information which is presented and analysed in the following section.

4.5 Improved Accessibility and Retrieval of Student Information

The findings revealed that effective records management practices enabled school administrators and teachers to retrieve student information quickly and accurately when preparing reports, verifying student details, or responding to requests from education authorities. Heads of schools further provided the following information:

“When student records are well organized and properly kept, it becomes easier for us to retrieve the required information quickly, especially when preparing school reports or responding to requests from education authorities” (Interview with Head of School B, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

Another head of school noted:

“Proper record keeping helps teachers and administrators verify student information such as academic performance, attendance, and personal details whenever the need arises” (Interview with Head of School A, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

The quotations above indicate that effective student records management practices facilitated quick access and retrieval of important student information, which supported timely preparation of reports, verification of student details, and efficient communication with education authorities. This demonstrated that well-managed records contributed to improved administrative efficiency and informed decision-making in secondary schools.

4.6 Enhanced Monitoring of Students’ Academic Progress and Discipline

The findings revealed that well-maintained records helped schools track students’ academic performance, attendance, and disciplinary cases, thereby supporting timely interventions to improve students’ outcomes. One head of school was quoted as saying:

“Student records such as academic reports, attendance registers, and disciplinary files help us monitor students’ progress and behaviour. This makes it easier for teachers and school administrators to identify problems early and take the necessary measures to support the students” (Interview with Head of School C, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

The quotation above indicates that maintaining comprehensive student records enabled schools to effectively monitor students’ academic performance, attendance, and disciplinary behaviour. This helped school administrators and teachers to identify challenges early and implement timely interventions, which contributed to improved student management and academic outcomes in secondary schools.

4.7 Support for Administrative Decision-Making

Heads of schools and records officers explained that effective records management provided reliable data for planning, reporting, and decision-making, such as preparing academic reports, allocating resources, and evaluating school performance. They provided the following testimonies to strengthen their argument as they were quoted as saying:

“Student records provide us with important information that helps in preparing school reports and making administrative decisions such as monitoring academic performance and planning school activities” (Interview with Head of School B, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

Another participant added:

“Accurate and well-kept student records help the school administration when making decisions related to students’ academic progress, resource allocation, and reporting to education authorities” (Interview with Records Officer 2, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

The quotations above indicate that effective student records management provided reliable and accurate information that supported administrative planning, reporting, and decision-making in schools. Properly

maintained records therefore enabled school administrators to evaluate performance, allocate resources appropriately, and make informed decisions that enhanced the overall management of secondary schools.

4.8 Promotion of Accountability and Transparency

Participants suggested that proper management of student records ensured accountability in school administration, since records provided official evidence of student enrollment, financial payments, academic achievements, and disciplinary actions. One head of school was quoted as saying:

“Student records provide official evidence of important information such as students’ enrollment, fee payments, academic performance, and disciplinary actions. Proper management of these records helps ensure transparency and accountability in the administration of the school” (Interview with Head of School C, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

The quotation above indicates that proper management of student records promoted accountability and transparency in school administration, as records served as official documentation of key student-related activities. This helped ensure that school decisions and actions were verifiable, well-documented, and consistent with administrative procedures.

4.9 Compliance with Educational Policies and Regulations

The findings revealed that effective records management practices helped schools comply with national education policies and guidelines related to the retention, security, and disposal of student records. This was further emphasized by teachers during the focus group discussion as they were quoted saying:

“When student records are properly kept and stored, it becomes easier for the school to follow the guidelines provided by the education authorities regarding how records should be retained and handled” (FGD with Teachers in School B, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

Other participants added:

“Keeping student records according to the required procedures helps the school comply with government policies and regulations related to education management” (FGD with Teachers in School C, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

The quotations above indicate that effective management of student records supported schools in complying with national education policies and regulatory guidelines concerning the retention, protection, and disposal of student information. Proper adherence to these procedures helped to ensure that schools operated within the established administrative and legal frameworks governing educational institutions.

4.10 Improved Institutional Memory and Continuity

The findings revealed that effective records management preserved historical student information, which was useful for future reference, verification of academic credentials, and institutional continuity within the school system. Teachers during the focus group discussions were quoted as saying:

“Student records help the school keep historical information about learners, which can be used later when verification of academic performance or school attendance is required” (FGD with Teachers in School A, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

On a similar note, other participants added:

“Maintaining student records for a long period helps the school to preserve important information that may be needed in the future for reference or official confirmation” (FGD with Teachers, Tabora Municipality, 2025).

The quotations above indicate that effective management of student records supported institutional memory by preserving important historical information about students. This enabled schools to verify academic credentials, provide accurate information when required, and maintain continuity in administrative processes over time.

4.11 Discussion

Based on the findings, it is evident that student records management practices in Tabora Municipal secondary schools played a pivotal role in supporting administrative

efficiency, accountability, and decision-making, although challenges remained in optimizing their effectiveness. The findings revealed that schools maintained diverse types of student records, including attendance registers, disciplinary records, academic performance reports, financial records, transfer and leaving certificates, health and medical records, and admission/enrollment registers. As participants noted, maintaining these records enabled schools to monitor students' progress, ensure accurate reporting, and comply with education authorities' requirements. This aligns with Al-Saleem (2022), who observed that comprehensive student recordkeeping enhances administrative effectiveness and supports data-driven decision-making in schools. Similarly, Ochieng et al. (2023) emphasized that maintaining multiple record types facilitates transparency, accountability, and the smooth operation of school management systems.

Regarding record maintenance methods, the study revealed that schools largely relied on paper-based (manual) systems, often due to limited digital infrastructure. Participants noted that while manual systems enabled documentation of student information, retrieving records was slow and challenging, particularly when dealing with large volumes of data. This finding is consistent with Bwalya (2021), who noted that reliance on manual recordkeeping in African schools often impedes timely access to student information and increases the risk of data loss or misplacement. Nonetheless, the schools' efforts to organize records by academic year, class level, and type demonstrate an understanding of systematic filing as a strategy to enhance accessibility, which supports effective school management (Nyoni, 2023).

The study also highlighted practices for record retention and disposal, with schools keeping records for varying periods depending on the type, and using methods such as burning, archiving, or transferring records to authorities. These practices underscored an attempt to balance regulatory compliance with practical considerations of storage and confidentiality. As supported by Muli (2022), effective retention and disposal policies are critical for safeguarding student information, preserving institutional memory, and complying with national education guidelines.

In terms of effectiveness, the findings revealed that well-maintained records enhanced accessibility and retrieval, allowing teachers and heads of schools to respond promptly to information requests, prepare reports, and verify student details. This observation aligns with Adebayo (2021), who asserts that efficient records management ensures that accurate and timely data supports both administrative and academic functions in schools. Similarly, comprehensive records enable schools to monitor academic progress, attendance, and disciplinary

cases, facilitating early interventions that improve student outcomes (Kihoro & Wanjiru, 2022).

Moreover, the study found that effective records management supports administrative decision-making and resource allocation. Participants noted that reliable records enabled schools to plan activities, allocate resources efficiently, and evaluate performance, which corroborates findings by Muturi (2023) highlighting that data-driven decisions in schools rely heavily on the accuracy and completeness of student records. The findings further revealed that proper records management promoted accountability and transparency, as records provided verifiable evidence of enrollment, fee payments, academic achievements, and disciplinary actions. This finding is consistent with Otieno (2022), who emphasizes that transparent recordkeeping strengthens governance and accountability in educational institutions. Finally, the study indicated that well-preserved records contributed to institutional memory and continuity, enabling schools to verify past academic credentials, track historical student information, and maintain operational consistency over time. As noted by Oduro and Asiedu (2021), effective archival practices in schools ensure continuity, facilitate long-term planning, and safeguard institutional knowledge.

Overall, the findings demonstrated that student records management in Tabora Municipal secondary schools contributed significantly to administrative efficiency, student monitoring, decision-making, accountability, and institutional continuity. However, reliance on manual systems, limited digital infrastructure, and inconsistent adherence to retention and disposal schedules presented challenges that needed to be addressed. These findings are consistent with current research from Sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting that proper recordkeeping practices are essential for optimizing educational management, ensuring policy compliance, and improving student outcomes (Al-Saleem, 2022; Bwalya, 2021; Ochieng et al., 2023; Muturi, 2023).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that effective student records management is vital for the smooth functioning of secondary schools in Tabora Municipality. Proper maintenance, organization, and retention of records improve information accessibility, support monitoring of academic performance and discipline, and provide reliable data for administrative decisions. Well-managed records also promote accountability, transparency, policy compliance, and institutional continuity. To maximize these benefits, schools should invest in training, infrastructure, and clear policies for records management.

Overall, efficient student records practices are essential not only for administrative efficiency but also for improving school performance and ensuring continuity in educational processes.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the foregoing findings, this study recommends the following:

1. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) should provide adequate funding, infrastructure, and technical support to enable schools to implement effective student records management practices, including the adoption of digital record systems.
2. School administrations should provide regular training for heads of schools, records officers, and teachers on proper maintenance, retention, and disposal of student records to ensure efficiency and compliance with policies.
3. Clear and standardized policies and guidelines on records management should be developed and enforced in all secondary schools to enhance accountability, transparency, and legal compliance.
4. Schools should invest in appropriate storage facilities, filing systems, and digital platforms to improve accessibility, retrieval, and long-term preservation of student records.
5. Regular audits and reviews of student records should be conducted to monitor adherence to retention and disposal schedules, identify gaps, and implement corrective measures promptly.
6. Collaboration among school staff, education authorities, and stakeholders should be strengthened to ensure that records management practices are consistent, sustainable, and aligned with national education regulations.

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