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Original Article

### The Influence of School Management Team on Student's Academic Performance in Tanzania

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**Keywords:**

School Management  
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Strategies and Academic  
Performance.

This research study investigated the impact of School Management Team (SMT) practices on students' academic performance in Tanzania. Focusing on various practices employed by school management teams, the study analyzed their correlation with students' academic achievements. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, it combined quantitative data analysis with qualitative interviews involving heads of schools, teachers, and students. Key factors examined included analyzing academic data, monitoring students' progress, and enhancing teachers' up-skilling, coordinating supportive services and creating a supportive network with other stakeholders to enhance students' academic performance. Data was gathered from six secondary schools in Mbeya City Council to ensure a 374-representative view of management practices. The findings revealed that SMTs are crucial in enhancing students' academic outcomes in Tanzania. These results contribute to the existing literature on educational management and offer insights for policymakers, educators, and school administrators on effective practices to improve student performance within the Tanzanian education system.

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#### INTRODUCTION

This study sought to provide insights into how effective School Management Team (SMT) practices within a school setting could contribute to

students' academic achievement, and examine the organizational practices implemented by SMT for students' academic performance. Masomo et al. (2021) noted that typical members of a school

management team include the Head of School, Deputy Head, School Accountant, Academic Master, and Discipline Master. These teams are responsible for implementing school development plans, ensuring quality education, and maintaining school infrastructure. Through fostering collaboration, communication, and continuous improvement, school management teams play a crucial role in enhancing students' academic performance (Masomo et al., 2021). According to Ngole, & Mkulu (2021), effective school management teams demonstrate clear goals, allocate resources effectively, and cultivate a supportive school environment. Additionally, they are tasked with implementing policies that promote student engagement, motivation, and well-being (Ngole, & Mkulu, 2021). Supporting teachers in professional development, providing necessary resources, and addressing challenges within the school community are also key responsibilities of school management teams (Mwamatandala, & Muneja, 2020).

Furthermore, it has been noted that School Management Teams (SMTs) bear the primary responsibility for overseeing and distributing resources, which are essential elements of comprehensive financial management within schools (Masomo et al., 2021). As middle managers, SMTs play a vital role in the budgeting process and various facets of financial oversight. It is crucial to establish and sustain a collaborative relationship between SMT members and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to achieve school objectives, founded on principles of mutual trust, teamwork, joint decision-making, open communication, and cooperation (Basson & Mestry, 2019).

In Tanzania, SMTs significantly impact students' academic performance through several initiatives. They establish educational goals and standards for students to aspire to (Kabelele & Machumu, 2022), allocate essential resources such as funding and personnel, and implement programs designed to enhance academic success. Ntseto (2015) highlighted that the primary aim of the School Management Team (SMT) is to elevate the quality of teaching and learning by fostering an environment conducive to all students. Additionally, SMTs provide leadership and support to teachers, cultivating a positive learning atmosphere that

promotes achievement. They also monitor student progress, evaluate performance, and introduce interventions to assist struggling learners, while actively engaging with parents and the community (Kabelele & Machumu, 2022).

In a study by Jonas & Mkulu (2022), it was found that State schools in England and North Ireland are overseen by School Governing Boards (SGB), responsible for supervising academic activities, school administration, strategic planning, staff appointments, financial management, and staff evaluations. Research by Duo et al. (2016) highlights how school management factors such as leadership styles, autonomy, and job satisfaction significantly impact teachers' organizational commitment in China. Within the African context, school management teams hold formal leadership positions within the school structure (Masomo et al., 2021). Daniel (2017) notes that schools in South Africa are supervised by school management teams established under the Government Act 84 of 1996. These teams are responsible for planning, directing, supervising, and controlling school activities on a day-to-day basis (Chiwamba et al., 2022). Teachers are expected to assume leadership roles, including managerial and administrative responsibilities, to support the school head in managing the school and enhancing overall student performance (Masomo et al., 2021).

In Kenya, the governance of schools varies based on educational levels. Primary schools are overseen by the School Management Committee (SMC) and the Centre Management Committee (CMC), while secondary schools and tertiary institutions are managed by the Board of Governors (BOG) (Mwesiga, & Okendo, 2018; Jonas, & Mkulu, 2022). This system differs from that of Tanzania, where the School Management Team (SMT) is responsible for tasks such as school development planning, financial management, monitoring teaching and learning processes, and creating a conducive educational environment (Mwaka, 2021). The effectiveness of school management is influenced by factors like educational level, the managerial and supervisory skills of administrators, and their ability to plan and delegate responsibilities effectively (Machumu, 2022). Mbeya City in Tanzania is recognized for the diverse academic achievements of its secondary

schools in national examinations. The School Management Team (SMT) in this area is tasked with organizing, executing, overseeing, and assessing the day-to-day operations of schools (Jonas, & Mkulu, 2022). Despite the diligent management and supervision of daily school activities by SMTs, few public schools have consistently shown lower performance in national exams. This study aimed to investigate the organizational strategies employed by SMTs to enhance students' academic performance in the Mbeya City Council.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem statement revolved around the persistent issue of poor academic performance in a few public secondary schools in Tanzania, despite ongoing efforts by the government and the Ministry of Education to enhance the education system. Recent studies (Mwaka, 2021; Masomo et al., 2021) have highlighted the impact of management on school academic performance. While there has been an overall improvement in students' performance in the country, there are still concerning failure rates in some public secondary schools for reasons that are not clearly understood (Paschal, & Mkulu, 2020). Despite various initiatives such as curriculum enhancements, infrastructure upgrades, and teacher recruitment, the issue of poor academic performance persists in few schools, raising questions about the effectiveness of current interventions. Existing research has focused on factors like leadership styles, communication processes, decision-making practices, resource allocation, and the overall organizational climate within schools. This study aimed to investigate the influence of School Management Team (SMT) practices on students' academic performance, specifically examining the organizational strategies implemented by SMTs in addressing this issue.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

School management teams (SMTs) establish a statement of intent (goal) along with aims, objectives, and learning outcomes to refine their vision. Jonas, & Mkulu (2022) highlighted the significant role played by school management teams in enhancing students' academic outcomes. School management teams typically address physical access to education, including transportation to school,

creating conducive learning environments, ensuring hygiene (such as access to toilets), maintaining school playgrounds, and promoting physical education. Hernandez (2018) emphasized the importance of inclusive and student-friendly educational environments that encourage active student participation. The physical aspects of the learning environment have a positive influence on creating a conducive atmosphere for learning. Inadequate teaching resources and infrastructure support lead to poor learning outcomes, particularly when physical access is limited or lacking. According to Khoza, & Mpungose (2018), goals motivate teachers to dedicate themselves to achieving the desired outcomes, serving as the driving force in the teaching and learning process. These goals also guide teachers in developing content, methods, and assessments to reach the desired objectives, leading to the demonstration of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes upon completion of a learning course.

In a study conducted by Mabaso (2021), the findings revealed that the majority of SMTs employed instructional and transformational practices in curriculum management. Additionally, SMTs were observed to engage in student assessment processes, involving the collection, review, and utilization of information within the school environment to enhance student performance. Borgesa et al. (2024) emphasized that such assessments provide valuable insights into students' knowledge and teachers' performance, aiding in evaluating instructional methods and overall material uptake. Assessments based on predetermined criteria also support school benchmarking, student performance evaluation, and teacher performance monitoring for outcome assessment. Park et al. (2016) insisted on the importance of goals in education, as they define the school's aspirations and objectives. Therefore, SMTs play a crucial role in setting direction by establishing and promoting shared goals among teachers. Essentially, SMTs should effectively communicate the schools' goals in terms of its desired achievements within a specific timeframe.

Mwamatandala, & Muneja (2020) demonstrated that management teams play a crucial role in enhancing and fostering teachers' commitment to improving students' academic performance. They emphasized

that a strong relationship exists between the effectiveness of school management and teachers' commitment, which collectively drives the overall success of the school, ultimately reflected in student outcomes. Senguo, & Ilomo (2020) underscored the significance of an efficient school management team in planning, motivating, and inspiring students to achieve academically. Their research affirmed that sound school management practices positively influence students' academic success. In a related investigation, Ezike (2018) indicated significant correlations between classroom environment and academic achievement, with the interplay of classroom environment and academic interest also proving to be significant. Furthermore, Motlalepula et al. (2022) identified several factors affecting learners' academic achievement, including the socioeconomic conditions of their home environment, the learning environment at school, lack of parental support, and low teacher expectations. This highlights that the relationship between school management teams and other stakeholders involved in a student's academic journey significantly influences their academic performance.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Mbeya City Council, focusing on 5729 individuals from 6 public secondary schools under government ownership.

This research utilized a case study design that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather comprehensive data and insights. Quantitative methods involved the use of questionnaires to assess the perceived impact of the School Management Team on academic performance practices. A total of 374 participants were selected through simple randomized sampling techniques for students and teachers across the six schools, while SMT members in each school were chosen through purposive sampling. Quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using Microsoft Excel to produce statistical descriptions and charts for presentation and interpretation. Qualitative data obtained from interviews was thematically analyzed. The findings were then discussed sequentially, addressing research questions one to three, and relevant theories and additional insights from the field were summarized to enrich the study's findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings on examining the organizational practices implemented by SMT for students' academic performance came from research questionnaires and interviews. In responding to the research question two: *What are organizational practices implemented by SMT for students' academic performance?* Five items were developed and the findings are summarized in Table 1 and 2.

**Table 1: Organizational Practices by SMTs for Students' Academic Performance**

Statement	Frequencies					Total
	A	SA	N	D	SD	
SMTs analyze academic data to identify areas of improvement and implement targeted interventions to support students.	136	56	91	31	15	329
SMTs regularly monitor students' progress, assess the effectiveness of academic initiatives to ensure improved academic performance.	134	54	95	29	13	
SMTs provide opportunities for teachers to enhance instructional practices through workshops, coaching, and collaboration, for benefiting students' performance.	110	51	96	54	18	
SMTs coordinate support services, such as tutoring, counseling to address students' individual needs and help them succeed academically.	112	49	90	60	18	
SMTs foster partnerships with stakeholders to create a supportive network that enhances students' academic performance.	90	45	107	59	27	
<b>Cumulative</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>91</b>	
<b>Average</b>	<b>116.4</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>95.8</b>	<b>46.6</b>	<b>18.2</b>	
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>35.38</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>29.11</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>5.81</b>	

Source: Field Data (August 8-14, 2024).

Table 2: Interview Findings

No.	Name	Findings
1.	Head of school A	Ensure that all students attend school and lesson classes; ensure that all students adhere to school rules and school timetable
2.	Head of school B	To ensure that both teachers and students attend all periods; to ensure that the subject topics are taught and timely completed; to reward both students who are academically doing good and those who are doing bad.
3.	Head of school C	Making school budget and implementing it accordingly. Evaluating the academic progress of students and identify the areas for improvement
4.	Head of school D	Creating a user friend atmosphere for learning and communication to identify issues that may affect students' learning
5.	Head of school E	To collect information on the students' challenges and provide solutions; to motivate both teachers and students Students counselling and guidance
6.	Head of school F	SMTs analyze academic data, such as assessment results and attendance records, to identify areas of improvement and implement targeted interventions to support students. SMTs provide supportive services such as counseling and guidance

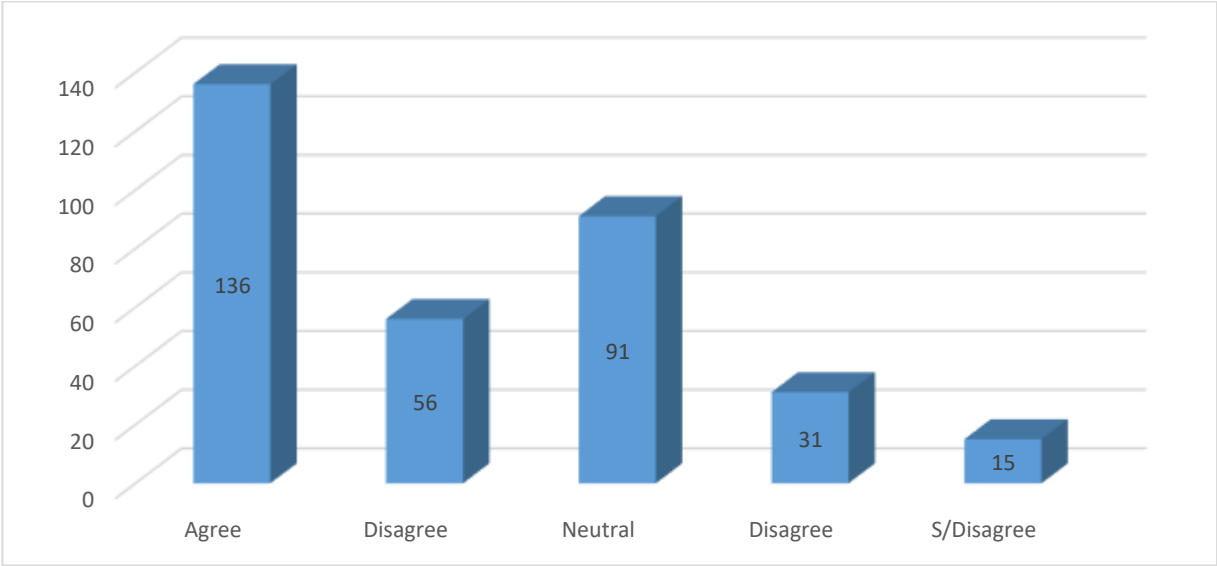
Source: Interview Session, (August 8-14, 2024).

SMTs Analyze Academic Data to Identify Areas of Improvement and Interventions

The analysis of academic data by School Management Teams (SMTs) to pinpoint areas for enhancement and implement specific interventions to assist students revealed that the responses for 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' were positively

skewed, with 136 and 56 instances respectively. This accounted for 41.3% for 'agreed' and 17% for 'strongly agreed'. Conversely, neutrality was observed in 91 cases (27.6%), while disagreement was noted in 31 cases (9.4%) and strong disagreement in 15 cases (4.5%), as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: SMTs Analyze Academic Data to Identify Areas of Improvement and Interventions



The findings implied that SMTs depended much on academic data analysis to identify the areas for improvement for students' benefits. It was further found that SMTs analyze academic data, such as assessment results and attendance records which help them to identify areas of improvement and

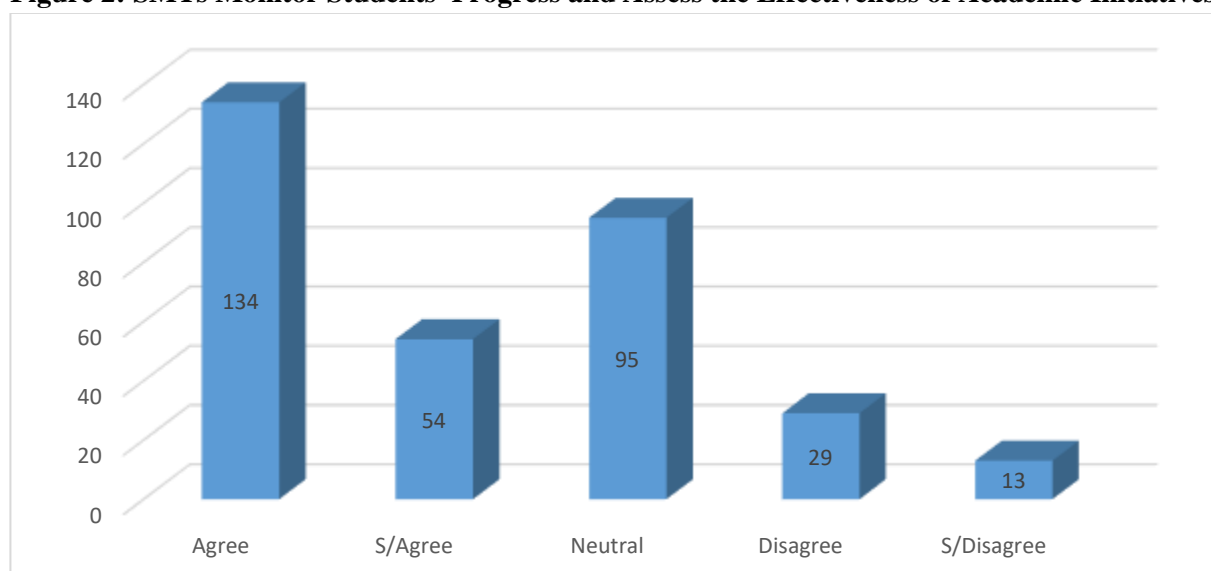
implement targeted interventions to support students (Head of school F, Interview Session, August 8-14, 2024). Literature supports this notion, as Mabaso (2021) pointed out SMT's role in continuously assessing school performance and driving its ongoing development. Concurrently, SMTs

observed that students' assessment processes, involve the collection, review, and utilization of information within the school environment to enhance student performance. In addition, Ngole, & Mkulu (2021) pointed out that effective school management teams demonstrate clear goals, allocate resources effectively, and cultivate a supportive school environment. Through fostering collaboration, communication, and continuous improvement, school management teams play a crucial role in enhancing students' academic performance (Masomo et al., 2021).

### **SMTs Monitor Students' Progress and Assess the Effectiveness of Academic Initiatives**

The analysis of academic data by School Management Teams (SMTs) to pinpoint areas for enhancement and implement specific interventions to assist students revealed that the responses for 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' were positively skewed, with 136 and 56 instances respectively. This accounted for 41.3% for 'agreed' and 17% for 'strongly agreed'. Conversely, neutrality was observed in 91 cases (27.6%), while disagreement was noted in 31 cases (9.4%) and strong disagreement in 15 cases (4.5%), as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 2: SMTs Monitor Students' Progress and Assess the Effectiveness of Academic Initiatives**



The findings on the analysis of academic data implied that SMTs positively monitor students' progress and assess the effectiveness of academic initiatives that brought good students' academic performance in schools. It was supported by Mabaso (2021) that the SMT's role in continuously assessing school performance and driving its ongoing development. Furthermore, SMTs set educational goals and standards for students to strive towards (Machumu, 2022), allocate vital resources such as funding and staff, and implement programs that enhance academic success. SMTs also offer leadership and support to teachers, creating a positive learning environment conducive to achievement. Furthermore, they monitor student progress, assess performance, and introduce interventions to assist struggling learners, while also

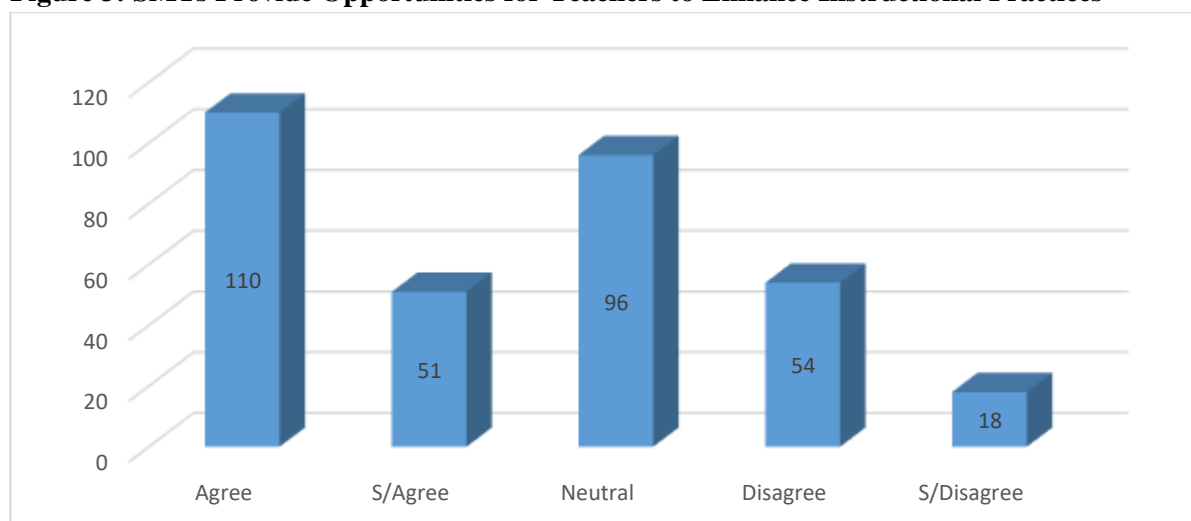
engaging with parents and the community (Machumu, 2022). It was added that SMT's were tasked with organizing, executing, overseeing, and assessing the day-to-day operations of schools (Jonas, & Mkulu, 2022) and monitoring all the interventions for performance.

### **SMTs Provide Opportunities for Teachers to Enhance Instructional Practices**

The research outcomes regarding School Management Teams (SMTs) present avenues for teachers to improve their instructional methods through workshops, coaching, and collaborative efforts, ultimately benefiting students' academic performance. The data revealed that the responses indicating agreement and strong agreement were significantly higher, with 110 and 51 respectively,

representing 33.4% and 15.5% of the total responses. Conversely, neutrality was reported in 96 cases (29.1%), while disagreement and strong disagreement accounted for 54 (16.4%) and 18 (5.4%) responses respectively, as illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: SMTs Provide Opportunities for Teachers to Enhance Instructional Practices**



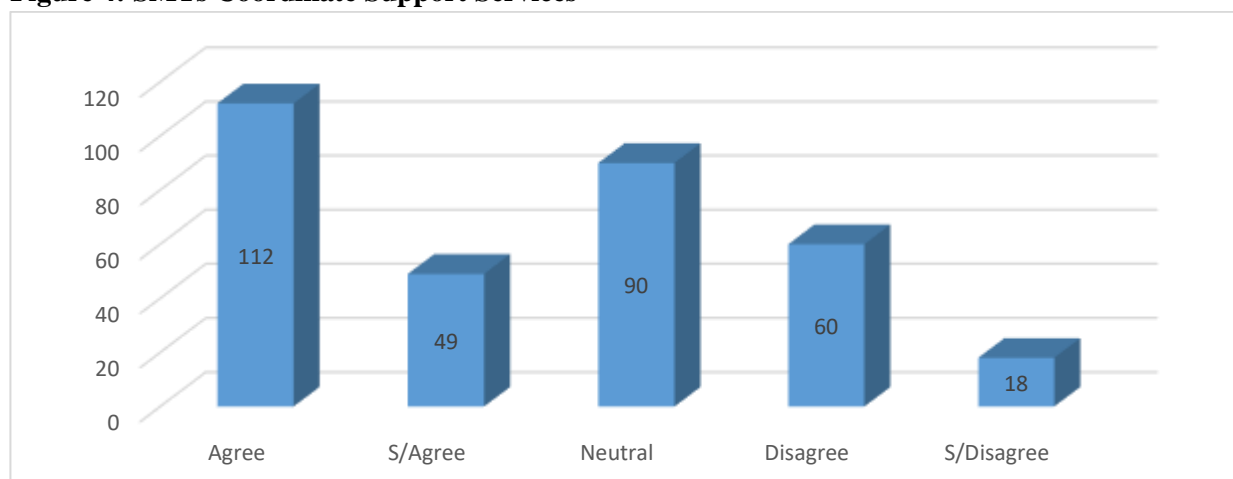
This implied that SMTs engage in helping teachers to find a friendly teaching atmosphere. The further findings indicated that teachers were also motivated in various ways (Head of School E, Interview Session, August 8-14, 2024). Head of school B added that, ensuring both teachers and students attend all periods; ensures that the subject topics are taught and timely completed; to reward both students who are academically doing good and those who are doing badly (Interview Session, August 8-14, 2024). On the other hand, Hernandez (2018) emphasized the importance of inclusive and student-friendly educational environments that encourage active student participation. The physical aspects of the learning environment have a positive influence on creating a conducive atmosphere for learning.

School management teams (SMTs) establish a statement of intent (goal) along with aims, objectives, and learning outcomes to refine their vision. Accordingly, supporting teachers in professional development, providing necessary resources, and addressing challenges within the school community were also key responsibilities of school management teams (Mwamatandala, & Muneja, 2020; Lakkala et al., 2021). Concurrently, Khoza, & Mpungose (2018) sought that, defined goals support teachers to dedicate themselves to achieving the desired outcomes, serving as the driving force in the teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, goals guide teachers in developing

content, methods, and assessments to reach the desired objectives, leading to the demonstration of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes upon completion of a learning course. It was further added that collaboration between school governing bodies and school management teams, strength both physical and cultural aspects such as grooming practices, and religious considerations to promote access to education. Park et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of goals in education, as they define the school's aspirations and objectives in which teachers are strengthened and driven. Therefore, SMTs play a crucial role in setting direction by establishing and promoting shared goals among teachers. Essentially, SMTs should effectively communicate the school's goals in terms of its desired achievements within a specific timeframe.

#### **SMTs Coordinate Support Services to Address Students' Individual Needs**

The results regarding the coordination of support services by School Management Teams (SMTs), including tutoring and counselling to meet students' individual needs and enhance academic success, revealed that 112 participants agreed and 49 strongly agreed, with 34% agreeing and 14.8% strongly agreeing. Conversely, 90 participants (27.3%) expressed neutrality, while 60 (18.2%) disagreed and 18 (5.4%) strongly disagreed, as illustrated in figure 4.

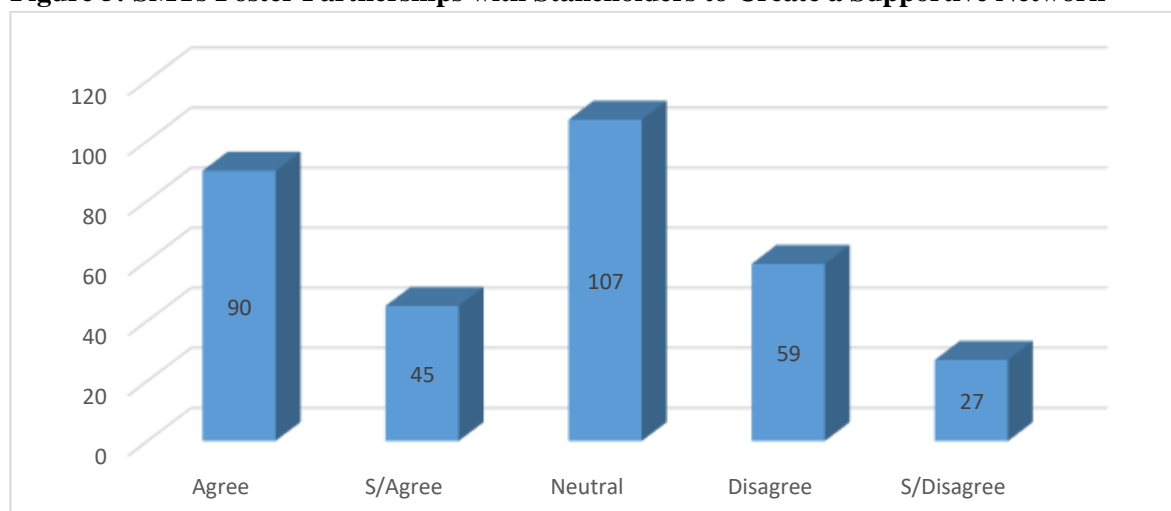
**Figure 4: SMTs Coordinate Support Services**

Identifying supportive students' needs and addressing those timely helps to sharpen students' abilities by creating friendly environment for academics. Head of school F, postulated that SMTs provide counseling and guidance to students to keep them at easy (Interview Session, August 8-14, 2024). Mwamatandala, & Muneja (2020) revealed that SMTs influence the effective and accelerate teachers' commitment towards students' academic performance. Furthermore, it was complimented that a significant relationship between school management effectiveness and teacher's commitment drives the whole school's success. Therefore, the commitment of teachers reflect in students' academic performance. Senguo, & Ilomo (2020) highlighted the importance of an effective school management team in planning, motivating, and inspiring students to excel academically. Ultimately, the research showed that effective school

management practices have a positive impact on students' academic achievement. Head of School D cemented that, creating a user friend atmosphere for learning and communication help in a great extent to identify issues that may affect students' learning (Interview Session, August 8-14, 2024).

#### **SMTs Foster Partnerships with Stakeholders to Create a Supportive Network**

The results regarding school management teams' efforts to build partnerships with stakeholders and establish a supportive network for improving students' academic performance revealed that 90 respondents agreed and 45 strongly agreed, with 27.3% agreeing and 13.6% strongly agreeing. Conversely, 107 respondents (32.5%) indicated neutrality, while 59 (17.9%) disagreed and 27 (8.2%) strongly disagreed, as illustrated in figure 5.

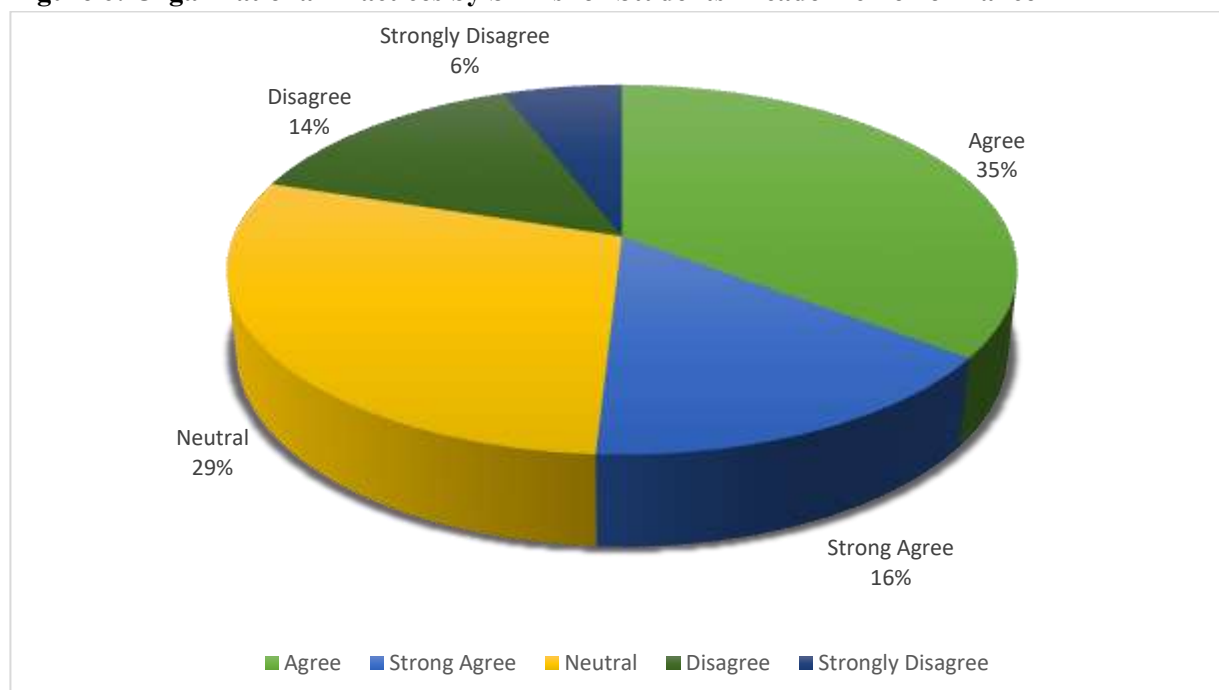
**Figure 5: SMTs Foster Partnerships with Stakeholders to Create a Supportive Network**

Engaging the stakeholders helps in making students active within the school environment and while at home. Head of school 'A' argued that collaborating with stakeholders was the way of ensuring that all students attended school and lesson classes as well as adhering to school rules and school timetable (Interview Session, August 8-14, 2024). Concurrently, Head of School B added that, ensure that both teachers and students attend all periods; to ensure that the subject topics are taught and timely completed; to reward both students who are academically doing good and those who are doing bad. It was supported by the School Effectiveness Theory (1970s) as postulated by educational researchers Edmonds and Lezotte. This theory examines how the leadership and management practices of the school team could contribute to creating a positive school environment that fosters academic success among students. Therefore, when applied to school management teams, this theory helps to understand the key components and the stakeholder's involvement that leads to effective school management and implement strategies to

improve overall performance. Furthermore, School Effectiveness Theory emphasises the importance of data-driven decision-making and continuous improvement to identify areas for growth and implement evidence-based interventions to support student learning and achievement. Hence the theory results in school management teams to improve organizational practices, enhancing students' support services, and ultimately, better academic performance for students.

Generally, the results on *examining the organizational practices implemented by SMT for students' academic performance* revealed that about 51% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, indicating a positive correlation between organizational practices by SMTs and students' academic performance. Conversely, 29% remained neutral, suggesting uncertainty regarding the impact of SMTs on academic performance. Additionally, 20% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The findings of question two were also depicted in figure 6 for further reference.

**Figure 6: Organizational Practices by SMTs for Students' Academic Performance**



The findings indicated that, 51% skewed positively to practices by SMTs for students' academic performance. The practices included: analyzing academic data, such as assessment results and attendance records, to identify areas of improvement

and implement targeted interventions to support students; regularly monitor students' progress, assess the effectiveness of academic initiatives, and adjust strategies as needed to ensure continuous improvement in academic performance; providing

opportunities for teachers to enhance their instructional practices through professional development workshops, coaching, and collaboration, ultimately benefiting students' academic performance; coordinate support services, such as tutoring, counseling, and academic enrichment programs, to address students' individual needs and help them succeed academically and fostering partnerships with stakeholders to create a supportive network that enhances students' academic performance.

## CONCLUSION

The feedback regarding the impact of school management team practices on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Mbeya City, Tanzania, was overwhelmingly positive. Key practices such as analyzing students' academic data, consistent monitoring, teacher development, coordinating support services, and fostering partnerships were highly emphasized. Consequently, the majority of respondents expressed a positive perception of the roles and practices of these management teams in enhancing academic achievement among students. As a result, school management teams were acknowledged as crucial in enhancing learning outcomes and improving students' academic success.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations and Further Research Areas

Based on the influence of school management team practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mbeya City, Tanzania, the following were three practical recommendations of the study:

Implementing effective communication channels between school management teams, teachers, students, and parents to ensure transparency and collaboration in decision-making processes for students' academic performance. This is the way of improving feedback from students, parents, and other stakeholders to gain insights into the effectiveness of SMT practices and identify areas for improvement.

Conduct a comprehensive review of the organizational practices currently in place by the

SMT, including policies, procedures, and initiatives aimed at enhancing academic performance.

### Recommendations for Future Research;

Investigating the relationship between collaborative practices between teachers and school principals within the Tanzanian educational system and its impact on student academic achievement. This research could delve into how effective communication, shared decision-making, and mutual support between teachers and principals contribute to creating a positive learning environment and enhancing student learning outcomes.

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