



School Discipline Management Strategies as Predictors of Learner Engagement in Private Secondary Schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District, Uganda

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Abstract. This study examined school discipline management strategies as predictors of learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District, Uganda. Guided by B. F. Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory, the study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 100 respondents using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. The study examined three discipline management strategies: positive reinforcement, guidance and counselling, and school rules and regulations. The findings revealed a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between positive reinforcement and learner engagement ($r = 0.477$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, guidance and counselling ($r = 0.068$, $p = 0.505$) and school rules and regulations ($r = 0.073$, $p = 0.473$) had weak, positive, and statistically insignificant relationships with learner engagement. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 95) = 13.780$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 30.3% of the variation in learner engagement ($R^2 = 0.303$). However, positive reinforcement was the only statistically significant individual predictor ($\beta = 0.548$, $p < 0.001$). The study concludes that positive reinforcement is an important predictor of learner engagement, while guidance and counselling and school rules and regulations did not independently demonstrate significant predictive relationships. The study recommends that teachers strengthen the use of praise, encouragement, rewards, and recognition to promote learner participation and engagement in classroom activities.

Keywords: School discipline management, positive reinforcement, guidance and counselling, school rules and regulations, learner engagement.

1. Introduction

Recent research show learner engagement as a critical concern in educational research because its strong relationship learner engagement, achievement in classroom learning, and retention and positive behaviors that lead to learners' achievement (Reschly and Christenson, 2022).

Lerner engagement could be understood as multidimensional constructs which students engage with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement to learn more. Skinner and Pitzer (2012) conceptualized student engagement as a dynamic process involving students' behavioural participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive investment in learning. Worldwide, learner engagement has received substantial attention as education systems endeavour to enhance learning outcomes and equip learners with the skills required in the twenty-first century.

Reschly and Christenson (2022) suggested that 'learner engagement has multiple dimensions comprising behavioral dimension of students engaged with school, emotional dimension of students engaged with classroom learning and cognitive dimension of student's engaged in classroom learning. Evidence from different regions of the world show that learners' engagement depends on school and contexts factors too. Van den Broeck et al. (2023) found that social economic status (SES), behavioral and emotional engagement positively predicted students' educational expectations in European city high schools, emphasizing the importance of learner engagement in enhancing educational outcomes.

According to Jimerson and Chen (2022), positive learning environment within schools and relationships between learners and teachers boost learners'

engagement in both varied cultures. Learner engagement has been a significant subject in education in the African continent. Bekker et al. (2024) indicated that engagement with school was associated with psychological well-being and decreased learner burnout for South African learners. On the other hand, Ahmed (2025) found insufficient learner support and weak school management to be reasons for learner disengagement in South African secondary schools. Makramalla (2021) observed that learner who actively participated learning experiences increased their interest and participation in classroom practices in Egyptian secondary schools. In Nigeria, Adeyemi et al. (2025) found hybrid learning strategies enhance learners' engagement and academic performance. According to Anierobi et al. (2023) and Ikegbusi and Ogamba (2026), engaging in learning at school and home, academic resilience and high self-esteem were among significant correlates of engagement with school among learners in Nigeria.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, various scholars reported similar predictors of learner engagement. Migwambo et al. (2024) found that teachers' digital content evaluation skills significantly predicted secondary school learners' engagement in English lessons. However, Amoade et al. (2025) found that academic resilience and learner motivation contribute to improved learner engagement for Ghanaian secondary students.

Learner engagement in Uganda is a topical issue as many of the secondary schools still encounter challenges of low participation of learners in the class, absenteeism, lack of motivation among learners, and poor performance in school subjects (Arinaitwe & Reddy, 2025). In their study, Kipuru and Kitembo (2025) asserted that learners' behavioral engagement and emotional engagement significantly predict learners' academic success at secondary school level. Joseph and Charles (2026) reported that decline of interest in learning among students was a contributing factor of learner disengagement in secondary schools in Uganda. In their study, Twesigye et al. (2023) highlighted that parental supervision helped to strengthen learners' engagement during schools' disturbances. In their respective studies, Julius and Audrey (2025) and Kaazara and Audrey (2025) revealed that inquiry-based learning method was very vital to enhanced learner engagement by involving learners actively in the lesson.

Prior studies indicate various factors predicting learner engagement; namely; instructional practices, learner motivation, parental influence, and enquiry-based approach have been established as significant factors

influencing learner engagement, while insufficient attention has been placed on school discipline management techniques (Ruiz et al., 2024; Saziwa, 2026). There is little research on the predictor role of positive reinforcement, rules and regulations of a school, and guidance and counseling in determining learner engagement in private secondary schools. Therefore, this study examined the extent to which school discipline management strategies predict learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite effort by secondary schools to enhance learner engagement, concerns about declining learner engagement in Luwero district has remained disappointingly alarming (Luwero District Education Office, 2021). This low level of learner engagement is caused by the high rates of teachers' absenteeism (35-40%) per day, parental nonchalant behaviour, insufficient learning and teaching resources, insufficient school facilities, insufficient academic resources and under-use of information and communication technologies in education (Nassaazi & Okee, 2024). According to Kagiri (2021), about 15% of students in secondary schools in Luwero lack important scholastic materials and some teachers were reported to use inappropriate teaching methods; most students lack sufficient food leading to poor concentrations in the classroom. Nassaazi and Okee (2024) further discovered that up to 27% of the teachers in public secondary schools in Luwero District do not show up for duty. Lack of effective internal monitoring of teachers, weak teacher effectiveness, limited interaction in the classroom, low learner participation and low levels of students' engagement are consequences of inadequate supervision of teachers in Luwero District (Ludigo et al., 2025).

Nansamba et al. (2024) reported that inadequate teacher support undermines students' academic resilience in Universal Secondary Education schools in Luwero. Also, Rukundo and Magara (2025) noted that even prevalence of local languages over English as a subject of instruction in the secondary school classrooms creates interference on learner's abilities to listen, understand and participate fully in the classroom discourse.

If these situations remain unchecked, there is a possibility that learner's engagement in classroom activities would decline thereby contributing to the low performance in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council. Therefore, the present

study examined the extent to which discipline management strategies predicted student's engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council of Luwero District.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The examined the extent to which discipline management strategies predicted student's engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council of Luwero District. The following specific objectives were formulated:

- To determine the extent to which positive reinforcement predicts learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.
- To determine the extent to which guidance and counselling predicts learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.
- To determine the extent to which school rules and regulations predict learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.
- To determine the extent to which positive reinforcement, guidance and counselling, and school rules and regulations collectively predict learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.

1.3 Hypotheses

H01: Positive reinforcement does not significantly predict learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.

H02: Guidance and counselling does not significantly predict learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.

H03: School rules and regulations do not significantly predict learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.

H04: Positive reinforcement, guidance and counselling, and school rules and regulations do not significantly predict learner engagement when considered jointly in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Informed by B.F. Skinner's (1948) Operant Conditioning Theory, the theory suggests that behaviour is determined by its consequences; a behaviour is strengthened if it is followed by reward

(positive reinforcement) and weakened if it is followed by punishment (Skinner, 1948; Staddon & Cerutti, 2003).

Thus, the theory underlines how a favourable behaviour can be strengthened by reward. Schools are one context in which teachers apply reward strategies like praise, rewards, encouragement, and recognition which reinforce behaviour such as participation, regularity, compliance with rules. (Skinner, 1948; Sundel & Sundel, 2018). When a student has been rewarded for participation, regular attendance, completing assignments, and maintaining discipline, and will be motivated to maintain this behaviour, hence this will result in greater engagement.

Although Skinner did elaborate on how negative reinforcement and punishment also play a part in behaviour reinforcement, this study focused solely at how positive reinforcement can predict learner behaviour, as proposed by the theory, this can also increase their levels of motivation, engagement and motivation in academic pursuits.

2.2 Discipline Management Strategies

Globally, school discipline in school contexts is conceived both as a management of behaviour as well as mechanisms to sustain learners' engagement. However, Ijaz et al (2024) stated that while negative reinforcement mechanisms such as suspension and warning help to instill learner's compliance it has adverse effect on learners' social and psychological well-being and engagement (Zondo et al., 2023), while positive mechanisms stimulate responsibility and learners' engagement (Firman et al., 2025).

When viewed from an organisational standpoint, strategies of managing discipline entail mechanisms of enforcement, uniformity, and justice in managing behavior(s) (Nwinyokpugi & Robinson, 2019). In education, discipline management strategies refer to institutional mechanisms that are put in place to guide behavior and promote learner engagement (Krskova et al., 2020).

School discipline in Ugandan secondary schools stem from the post-corporal punishment era, focus more on building disciplinary structure of guide, corrections and supported by the school leadership to ensure that teachers can handle student discipline and behavioral results in school environment (Santo et al., 2025). Similarly, Kaweesi et al. (2023) note that consistent use of discipline management practices promotes student behaviour in private secondary schools, however inconsistencies limit their effectiveness.

Ludigo, Buet al. (2025) observed effective internal school supervision and implementation of school policies enhances to improved educational outcomes.

Despite these improvements, scanty evidence exists on how particular discipline management strategies predict learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District, creating a contextual and empirical gap for this study.

2.3 Positive Reinforcement and Learner Engagement

Positive reinforcement is a behavioral learning principle involving the provision of a desirable outcome after the desired behavior happens to reinforce the likeliness that it happens again (Barata, 2022). It includes praise, acknowledgements, compliments, tangible rewards and others which can promote getting and keeping the target behaviour, both in academic and behavior terms (Gunaretnam, 2021). The impact of positive reinforcement includes the interaction of student and teacher which does not limit to tangible rewards only (Nikishyna et al., 2023).

Studies from Western and European contexts have consistently reported that positive reinforcers lead to learner engagement and involvement. For instance, Nikishyna et al. (2023) identified that positive verbal reinforcers (e.g. Praising words, encouragement) used constantly lead to improvement in the students' participation and reactivity towards the teaching instructions. The findings from Mondol et al. (2026) also suggested that learners' engagement toward learning are stronger when supported in a positive school climate that involved consistent positive reinforcement. However, these studies were conducted within well-resourced and structured learner supportive systems, hence, it is not confirmed whether same result can be obtained in a school within a low resource setting.

Evidence from Asian countries also support how positive reinforcement practices predicts learner engagement. For instance, the consistent use of reinforcements to influence the learner engagement enhanced learning (Khanum et al., 2025). Nevertheless, most Asian studies have concentrated on primary education, leaving limited evidence on how positive reinforcement predict learner engagement among secondary school students.

Studies carried out across Africa like in Nigeria shows that the use of positive reinforcement decreases the absenteeism of the students and also increases learners' interest in school. However, a large number of studies in Africa continued to measure students'

attendance, discipline and school achievement instead of their learners' engagement (Abdulrazak et al., 2025).

In Uganda, research on positive reinforcement remains scanty. Ismail (2023), as well Ahmed (2026), indicates that teachers who continually used positive reinforcement noted elevated rates of classroom participation and attentiveness of learners. However, limited empirical evidence studies have investigated positive reinforcement to predict learner engagement in private secondary schools particularly in semi-urban like Wobulenzi Town Council in Luwero District

2.4 Guidance and Counselling and Learner Engagement

Guidance and counselling are also becoming more accepted as a school-based service aiming to assist students to face academic, social and emotional problems and enhance school attendance. Counselling assistance with students developing coping skills, with making choices and adapting to school (Akdemir, 2023).

In most studies, learner engagement is not measured directly. Instead, it is often reflected through related outcomes such as self-efficacy or academic adjustment. This creates a limitation because engagement is usually assumed rather than clearly measured in its behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Counselling is usually described with theories such as the Social Cognitive Theory, Humanistic Theory but often research papers do not clarify the connection between the theory and continuous engagement for learners at school. The terms 'guidance' and 'counselling' usually means services that provides organised school services that assists children in dealing with the learning situation and related social, behavioural, emotional and academic tasks (Canzittu, 2024). Such a service aims to assist children in becoming more effective to improve their active participation in teaching and learning at school.

Evidence from Europe has shown that counselling improves learner retention as well as reducing dropout rate by managing various problems leading to lack of engagement (Psifidou et al., 2021). According to Steen et al (2022) school counselling service also enhances learner engagement. However, most of these studies are based on well-developed counselling systems, which may not reflect the situation in schools where counselling services are still developing or less structured.

In African, the most prevalent perception of counseling tends to be associated with better academic performance, discipline and behaviour. Counselling was identified as contributing to student success, especially within resource poor schools, and assisting learners to resolve academic, social and behavioural issues which prevent school participation (Muluvhu-Malanga, 2024; Dianovi et al., 2022). Nevertheless, most studies tend to emphasize academic and behavioural results over learner engagement per se.

In Uganda, guidance and counselling is slowly gaining ground in secondary schools, although implementation is still uneven. Counseling services in schools currently revolve largely around career counseling and discipline management. Counselling services over time as in how they help the students make career choices and adjust have been addressed by Otwine et al., (2025), while Mugalu and Muhammed (2023), and Otwine et al. (2025) demonstrate how counselling has positively impact students' academic performance in secondary schools in Uganda. Still, little has been studied concerning how guidance and counseling predicts learner engagement in private secondary schools.

2.5 School Rules and Regulations and Learner Engagement

School rules are formal guidelines that prescribe the standards for good conduct, set out the rights and responsibilities of each member of the school community, and define how order should be preserved in schools. They provide a basis on which order, responsibility, fairness, consistency, and discipline are maintained in school to create an environment that facilitate the processes of teaching and learning (Koop & Lodge, 2017). A school that streamlines school rules can make peaceful learning environment, orderly and supportive for the effective learner engagement. Conceptually school rules are supposed to create an environment within which learners are willing to engage, assume responsibility for their learning and invest in learning. In most studies of school rules however, evaluation has tended to be on terms other than learner engagement and typically focuses on student behaviour, achievement, compliance with rules, school atmosphere etc. Thus, the impact on learner engagement has often been implicitly inferred rather than assessed. There has been little discussion in existing studies as to school rules leads learners to develop engaged attitudes predicts learner engagement.

In Africa, studies consistently associate school rules and regulations with improved discipline, learner

behaviour, and educational outcomes. In Kenya, Akech et al. (2022) reported that involving learners in the development of school rules enhanced discipline management by strengthening learners' ownership and commitment to school regulations. Similarly, Idris (2023) found that effective implementation of school rules was positively associated with students' academic performance in Nigeria, while Nduwayezu and John (2025) observed that internal school rules strengthened learner accountability and improved academic outcomes in Rwanda. Despite these positive findings, most African studies have examined school rules through discipline, behaviour management, and academic performance rather than learner engagement as a specific outcome. Consequently, limited evidence exists on whether school rules and regulations independently predict learners' behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement in secondary school settings.

In Uganda, schools' rules and policies still have significant impacts on school management and learners' management. For example, school policies aiming to ensure welfare of both staff and learners can lead to positive learning environment in public secondary schools, according to Nabirye et al (2022). Furthermore, effective supervision and application of internal policies were positively associated with learning outcomes in government aided secondary schools of Luwero District (Ludigo et al., 2025). However, most research focused on public schools, discipline and welfare of learners as well as learning outcomes, but with not much regard for learner engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample / Study Group

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The design was appropriate because it enabled the collection of data at a single point in time to describe discipline management strategies and learner engagement, and to examine the extent to which positive reinforcement, guidance and counselling, and school rules and regulations predict learner engagement in private secondary schools.

The study was conducted in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District, located in Central Uganda along the Kampala–Gulu Highway. The area was selected because of persistent concerns about low learner engagement in private secondary schools and the presence of diverse discipline management practices, making it suitable for examining the

relationship between discipline management strategies and learner engagement.

The target population comprised students, teachers, head teachers, and district education officials from four selected private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council. The total population was 145 respondents distributed across Mulusa Academy Wobulenzi (35), Wobulenzi High School (35), Focus Secondary School (35), and Katikamu SDA Secondary School (40). Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a quantitative sample of 103 student respondents was selected.

The study employed Stratified sampling and simple random sampling. Stratified sampling was first used to group student respondents into relevant strata (such as class level or gender, depending on the study context) to ensure proper representation of key subgroups within the population. Simple random sampling was then used within each stratum to select student respondents, ensuring that every individual had an equal chance of participation and reducing selection bias (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using structured self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires enabled the researcher to obtain quantifiable data from a large number of respondents, enhancing the generalisability of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.3 Measurement Tool

The study used self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides as the principal data collection instruments. The questionnaires were administered to student respondents and consisted mainly of close-ended items measured on a five-point

Likert scale to facilitate standardised responses and quantitative analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kothari, 2004). The questionnaire first captured demographic information such as age, gender, and class level, which helped describe the characteristics of the respondents and support comparative analysis.

Student engagement was measured as the dependent variable and was operationalised through indicators reflecting social, cognitive, behavioural, collaborative, and emotional engagement (Fredricks, Filsecker, & Lawson, 2016; Bond & Bedenlier, 2019). The independent variables focused on discipline management strategies, which included positive reinforcement, guidance and counselling, and school rules and regulations. These dimensions examined how disciplinary practices predicted learner engagement.

3.4 Data Processing

Data were collected through questionnaires were edited, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Data cleaning procedures were conducted to identify and correct errors, omissions, and inconsistencies before analysis. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and study variables. At the bivariate level, Pearson correlation analysis was used to establish how discipline management strategies predicted learner engagement. At the multivariate level, multiple linear regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which positive reinforcement, guidance and counselling, and school rules and regulations collectively predict learner engagement.

4. Results

The results of the various findings on this study are presented in the tables 1-7 below.

Table 1: Descriptive Results for Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Category with Highest Representation	Frequency	Percent (%)
School attended	Mulusa Wobulenzi Academy	36	36.0
Age of respondents	22 years and above	49	39.2
Gender	Female	57	65.7
Type of class	Senior Three (S.3)	52	51.0
Duration in school	Three years and above	39	40.2
Learning frequency per week	Five times and above	61	58.8
	English/Literature	34	32.4

From Table 1, the data indicated that the majority of respondents were from Mulusa Wobulenzi Academy (36.0%), aged 22 years and above (39.2%), and were female (65.7%). Most respondents were in Senior Three (51.0%), had studied in their schools for three years and above (40.2%), and attended lessons five times or more per week (58.8%). The preferred subject to all groups of students was English/ Literature (32.4%). The findings show that respondents represented varied school and academic backgrounds.

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of the Engagement constructs

Constructs	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)
Cognitive Engagement	3.62	1.24
Social Engagement	3.37	1.31
Collaborative Engagement	3.02	1.35
Behavioral Engagement	3.22	1.22
Emotional Engagement	3.22	1.25

Results from table 2 suggest that learner's engagement with the five dimensions were at moderate-high level. The respondents who participated in this study perceived they are high engaged both for the aspect of cognitive engagement (M = 3.62, SD = 1.24), which means they are engaging to understand the material being delivered. They showed a relatively high-level engagement in both social engagement (M = 3.37, SD = 1.31), behavioral, and emotional engagement (M=3.22) as student responded positively to teacher and classroom rules. The least score was received by collaborative engagement (M = 3.02, SD = 1.35), which seems a little low to measure teamwork and co-activity within groups of learners. The overall results indicated that student did very well in cognitive aspect compared to the collaborative aspect, which needs improvement.

Table 3: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of the Variables

Constructs	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Positive Reinforcement PRF	3.10	1.34
Guidance and Counseling	4.20	0.79
School Rules and Regulations	3.97	0.99

The data revealed an overall perception by the students that discipline management practices were present in schools. Guidance and counseling achieved the top mean rank score (M= 4.20, SD= .79) implying that there were high perceived levels of teacher concern over students emotionally, academically, career as well as for personal growth. High mean rank scores for the presence of school rules and regulations (M= 3.97, SD= .99) suggested students' perceptions of this practice as clear, fair and understandable to all students. The use of positive reinforcement ranked the lowest (M= 3.10, SD= 1.34) thus implying that while teachers had a high perception use of praise, reward and recognition, these practices differ among the students. Essentially, teachers have strengths related to guidance/counseling and excellent rule enforcement, but they need to standardize effective use of reinforcement.

4.1 Hypotheses testing

Inferred from the research, the researcher hypothesized a correlation: H₀₁: Positive reinforcement, H₀₂: guidance and counselling, and H₀₃: school rules and regulations do not significantly predict learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was run to test the significance predictability, respectively. The findings of findings are presented in Table4.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation of PRFM, GDC, SRR, and Learner engagement

Discipline Management Practices	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed) (p)	N
Positive Reinforcement (PRFM)	0.477**	0.000	100
Guidance and Counseling (GDC)	0.068	0.505	100
School Rules and Regulations (SRR)	0.073	0.473	100

The results in Table 4 indicate that positive reinforcement had a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship with learner engagement (r = 0.477, p < 0.01), implying that students who receive praise, recognition, and rewards tend to display higher engagement levels. Since the significance value was below the 0.01 threshold, the null hypothesis (H₀₁) that positive reinforcement has no statistically significant relationship with learner engagement was rejected. However, guidance and counseling (r = 0.068, p = 0.505) and school rules and regulations (r = 0.073, p =

0.473) showed weak positive but statistically insignificant relationships with learner engagement. Since their p-values were greater than 0.01, the null hypotheses (H_{02} and H_{03}) were not rejected, indicating that guidance and counseling and school rules and regulations did not significantly predict learner engagement. This suggests that while these practices contribute to streamlining discipline, their direct prediction on learner engagement was not statistically significant in this study.

Table 5: Multiple Regression of Positive reinforcement, Guidance and Counselling, and Learner Engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.551 ^a	.303	.281	.56963

The model summary in Table 5 indicates that positive reinforcement, guidance and counseling, and school rules and regulations collectively explain a significant proportion of variation in student engagement. The model showed a moderate positive correlation ($R = 0.551$) and an R^2 of 0.303, suggesting that the three discipline management practices account for 30.3% of the variation in student engagement. The adjusted R^2 (0.281) verify the stability of the model, while the remaining 69.7% of variation is explained by other factors outside the model. The standard error of the estimate (0.56963) indicates a relatively acceptable deviation of error.

Table 6: ANOVA on PRFM, GDCS, and SRRS and Students Engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.414	3	4.471	13.780	.000 ^b
	Residual	30.825	95	.324		
	Total	44.239	98			

The ANOVA results as presented in Table 6 are used to determine the overall significance of the overall regression model that is predicting learner engagement from positive reinforcement, guidance and counseling, and school rules and regulations. The regression model as per the results obtained is significant; $F(3, 95) = 13.780$, $p = .000$. As $p < 0.01$ the regression model is significant at 1% level. This demonstrates that PRFM, GDCS and SRRS significantly predict learner engagement in private secondary schools of Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District.

Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected as the combined predictors do significantly explain variability in the learner engagement. Furthermore, the model is reliable for predictions on learner engagement using the three independent variables.

Table 7: Correlation coefficient of PRFM, GDC, and SRR and Student Engagement

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Tolerance	Statistics VIF
1	(Constant)	1.624	.587		2.765	.007		
	PRFM	.317	.050	.548	6.353	.000	.986	1.015
	GDC	.048	.138	.033	.351	.726	.847	1.181
	SRRS	.127	.096	.125	1.331	.186	.835	1.197

The multiple regression analysis indicated that positive reinforcement significantly predicted learner engagement ($\beta = .548$, $t = 6.353$, $p < .001$). In contrast, guidance and counselling ($\beta = .033$, $t = .351$, $p = .726$) and school rules and regulations ($\beta = .125$, $t = 1.331$, $p = .186$) did not significantly predict learner engagement. The findings reveal that positive reinforcement explained most of the variations in learner engagement among the examined school discipline management practices. The collinearity statistics showed acceptable levels of tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF), suggesting that multicollinearity was not a concern.

5. Discussion

Result from the study reveal that positive reinforcement is the highest significant predictor of learner engagement, such that positive reinforcement is positively correlated with learner engagement. This result support Skinner's theory of operant conditionality (1948) which stated that the behavior will increase in probability if the behavior has a reinforcing stimulus for the learner. The finding also concurs with research by Nikishyna et al. (2023), and Khanum et al. (2025), which concluded that encouragement and the practice of reinforcement boost learner participation and motivation. In addition,

the findings are supported by Ismail (2023) in which found that positive reinforcement increased participation in classroom participation and attentiveness in learners of Uganda.

The study further found that guidance and counselling were weak and statistically insignificant predictors of learner engagement. Although literature suggests that counselling supports learners' emotional adjustment, behaviour, and academic development (Akdemir, 2023; Canzittu, 2024), the current findings indicate that counselling alone may not sufficiently predict learner engagement in private secondary schools. This finding may be explained by variations in the implementation and availability of counselling services, where counselling may focus more on discipline and career guidance than on directly promoting behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

In a similar vein, the school rules and regulations had a low and non-significant predictor of learner engagement. It has been established in several studies that the school rules enhance discipline, accountability and an organized learning environment (Koop & Lodge, 2017; Akech et al., 2022) however in this study, the results reveal that just having rules in place may not necessarily culminate in an engaged learner. The quality of delivery and implementation and perception of rules on the part of the learner are vital for effective participation.

The combined regression model revealed that positive reinforcement, guidance and counselling, and school rules and regulations significantly predicted learner engagement, explaining 30.3% of the variation in engagement. However, positive reinforcement remained the only significant individual predictor. The study corroborates Skinner's theory in showing that the more direct modes of reinforcement are more significant than general discipline regimes in influencing pupil participation and behaviour. In conclusion, though management regimes in discipline as a whole increase participation of learners in the learning activities, positive reinforcement remains the key strategy in determining the pupils' level of participation, commitment to their learning and motivation.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the extent to which positive reinforcement predicts learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District. The findings show that positive reinforcement significantly learner engagement and

isthe strongest predictor among the variables studied. This indicates that the use of praise, rewards, and encouragement plays an important role in improving students' participation, interest, and involvement in learning activities.

The study findings reveal also that guidance and counselling, and school rules and regulations do not predict learners' engagement in the study area. This implies that in isolation the interventions, although crucial in ensuring the discipline of the learners, may not necessarily enhance their participation. In summation, the three factors accounted for a significant proportion of variability in learners' engagement, meaning that they contribute collectively to the behavioural aspect and participation of the learners.

The study concludes that learner engagement is more strongly predicted by classroom-based reinforcement practices than by broader institutional support systems such as guidance and counselling and school rules.

7. Recommendations

The recommendations arising from the study are as follows; Firstly, teachers should continually use the reinforcement positive techniques (such as rewards, praise, rewards and acknowledgement) in the classroom in order to motivate desired behavior among the learners so as to achieve greater class participation. Secondly, school administrators should improve the guidance and counseling system of the school; through proper organization, provision of well-trained teachers and integration with student's needs, both behavioral and academic. Thirdly, school management should assess how regulations/rules are applied in schools; they should ensure fairness, clarity and uniformity in their application. Sharing school rules with students, or asking for input from students could promote a better understanding of and compliance with school rules. Fourthly, the school should embrace a multi-pronged approach which integrates the reinforcement techniques, the guidance and counseling service, and well-thought-out school rules, rather than using only one intervention in trying to improve the learner's participation. Lastly, education authorities should promote on-going teacher in-service training programs on learner motivation, effective classroom management, and especially reinforcement as they tend to have a higher impact on student engagement.

8. Areas for Further Study

This study examined the extent to which school discipline management strategies predicted learner engagement in private secondary schools in Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District, Uganda. Given the study's findings, the following are proposed as future areas of inquiry: Future research could address the various other potential influencing variables like teacher-student relationships, school climate, instructional strategies, and peers. Other researchers could investigate the possible mediating roles that guidance and counseling, and school rules and regulations have on learner engagement; perhaps by school climate or learner motivation. Similar investigations could also be done on public schools and rural schools for purposes of comparisons with private schools and generalizability. Fourth, future studies should use longitudinal or mixed-method approaches in order to capture changes in student engagement over time and provide deeper explanations of the observed relationships. Finally, further research should consider analysing student engagement in its different dimensions, including behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and agentic engagement, to provide a more detailed understanding of how school practices influence each aspect.

9. Limitations of the Study

The study had several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limited the ability to establish causal relationships between discipline management strategies and learner engagement. Secondly there might have been a response bias due to reliance on self-reported information, but this was addressed by anonymous and confidential responses, careful instructions to respondents and used established data collections instruments. Third, the study focused on private secondary schools in one district, limiting generalizability to other contexts. Finally, the study examined only three discipline management strategies, while other factors may also influence learner engagement. Future studies should consider broader settings and additional variables.

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