DETERMINANTS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN SUMBAWANGA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, RUKWA REGION- TANZANIA

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Abstract: **This study examined the determinants of community participation in education sector development projects in Sumbawanga Municipal Council, Rukwa Region, Tanzania. Three specific objectives guided it; examining demographic, social, and economic factors to understand how they contribute to community participation. The study was carried out in Kizwite and Ntendo wards using a mixed research approach and a cross-sectional design. A quantitative sample size of 50 heads of households from the target population of 9,622 households and a qualitative sample size of 13 key informants were involved, found through simple random sampling and purposive selection. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary review, and analyzed using SPSS Version 25 and thematic analysis. The findings showed that demographic factors such as age, sex, marital status and education level contributed to how people took part in projects. Younger and more educated individuals participated more actively. Social factors, including awareness, health conditions, and social networks, also played an essential role in shaping participation. People with good health, stronger networks, and higher awareness levels were more engaged. Economic factors, particularly income, asset ownership, and the nature of employment, made a substantial contribution. People with stable income and resources were able to support projects through labor, materials, and decision-making. However, challenges such as low awareness, gender imbalance, and unequal tight working schedules reduced participation among some groups. The study concludes that meaningful community participation depends on the combined contribution of these demographic, social, and economic factors. It recommends increasing awareness, promoting equality, supporting local leadership, and improving community economic opportunities to strengthen active involvement in education development projects.**

Keywords: **community participation, education sector development projects, Social factors, including awareness, health conditions, improving community economic opportunities.**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

Community participation has become a key element in achieving sustainable development. Rather than being passive recipients, communities are now viewed as vital stakeholders in planning and managing development initiatives. This participatory approach aligns with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** especially **SDG 3** (Good Health and Well-being) and **SDG 4** (Quality Education) which emphasize inclusive decision-making and citizen engagement (Ozaki & Shaw, 2022). Active involvement enhances project success, social cohesion, and democratic governance (Jewett et al., 2021).

In countries with centralized governance traditions, such as **Tanzania**, participation remains critical. While policies like the **Local Government Reform Program (LGRP)** and **Education Sector Development Program (ESDP)** encourage local involvement, implementation has often been limited (Kilewo & Frumence, 2021). To ensure effective local development, increased awareness, empowerment, and transparent governance are essential (Malipula, 2024).

This study examines the determinants of community participation in education development projects in **Sumbawanga Municipal Council**, focusing on **demographic characteristics, social factors, and economic levels** as key influences.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite Tanzania's reforms promoting participatory governance, community engagement in local education projects remains weak. Regions such as **Arusha City Council** have improved school infrastructure through the **Primary Education Development Projects (PEDPs)** but still face challenges like fund mismanagement, delays, and limited public participation (Ismail, 2022).

Similarly, **Sumbawanga Municipal Council** experiences incomplete projects and low community involvement. The **Controller and Auditor General (CAG)** reported significant delays in the municipal hospital project despite large allocations (TZS 956,340,753 between 2020–2023). Investigations by the **Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB)** in 2023 revealed inflated costs and weak community oversight in projects such as **Kizwite** and **Mazwi Secondary Schools**.

There remains limited understanding of how demographic, social, and economic factors influence community participation. Without such insights, efforts to improve education development outcomes will remain fragmented.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

To examine the determinants of community participation in local government education development projects in **Sumbawanga Municipal Council, Rukwa Region**.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

a) Examine the contribution of **demographic factors** to community participation in education development projects.

b) Examine the contribution of **social factors** to community participation in education development projects.

c) Examine the contribution of **economic factors** to community participation in education development projects.

1.4 Research Questions

a) How do demographic factors contribute to community participation in education development projects?

b) How do social factors contribute to community participation in education development projects?

c) How do economic factors contribute to community participation in education development projects?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study provides insights for **local governments, stakeholders, and residents** on factors shaping community participation in education initiatives. Findings will guide evidence-based policy formulation and promote inclusive governance. It also contributes to academic knowledge on participatory development and fulfils part of the requirements for a **Master of Arts in Community Development and Project**.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is confined to **Sumbawanga Municipal Council** in **Rukwa Region**, focusing on households, local officials, and stakeholders involved in education sector projects. It examines how **demographic, social, and economic** factors influence participation in project planning, implementation, and monitoring.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Community: A group of people sharing common interests, goals, or locality (Bauwens et al., 2022; Wray et al., 2024). In this study, it refers to residents of Sumbawanga Municipal area involved in education projects.

Community Participation: The active involvement of community members in identifying, planning, implementing, and evaluating projects affecting their lives (Odoom et al., 2021; Rijal, 2023). It promotes ownership, accountability, and sustainability.

Education Development Projects: Initiatives aimed at improving education systems through infrastructure, training, or policy reforms (Madrid & Chapman, 2024). In this study, they include Sumbawanga's local government efforts to enhance educational facilities and outcomes.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

2.1.1 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory explains how social networks, norms, and trust facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993). It emphasizes that relationships and networks serve as valuable resources that individuals and groups can use to achieve collective goals.

According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital consists of actual or potential resources linked to a durable network of relationships. Coleman (1988) further viewed it as obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness embedded in social structures that enable individuals to act collectively. Putnam (1993) stressed that civic engagement and trust among citizens contribute to efficient democratic institutions and community development.

Recent scholars (Mahmood & Smith, 2023; Mwai et al., 2022) argue that individuals with extensive networks access more social and economic opportunities. They view social capital as encompassing bonding ties (within groups) and bridging ties (across groups), both essential for mobilizing collective resources. Nelson and Black (2019) and Wambua (2020) confirm that participation in associations and community groups improves the ability to share knowledge, mobilize funds, and implement development programs.

Therefore, the Social Capital Theory underpins this study by illustrating how community networks, education levels, economic capacities, and social trust collectively influence participation in education development projects. It suggests that communities rich in social capital exhibit higher collaboration, leading to more successful and sustainable educational outcomes.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

2.2.1 Demographic Factors and Community Participation

Demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, education, and household size significantly influence participation in development activities. Age often determines engagement levels; older adults tend to participate more in community initiatives due to stronger social ties, though their involvement may decline with deteriorating health (Chakrabarty, 2020; Obeng, 2020).

Gender also affects participation. Men are frequently overrepresented in community decision-making, while women's involvement is constrained by cultural norms, caregiving roles, and limited economic resources (Bansal, 2019; Kilonzo, 2020). However, where gender inclusion programs exist, women's participation rises sharply, leading to more inclusive development outcomes.

Education plays a consistently positive role in participation (Ndungu, 2022; Hassan, 2021). Educated individuals possess better awareness, problem-solving skills, and confidence to engage in community discussions. They also tend to perceive the long-term benefits of collective development.

Marital status influences participation through social responsibility. Married individuals often invest more in local development to secure a better future for their families (Mutiso, 2020). Household size can also have mixed effects. Large households may provide labor for community work (Melesse et al., 2020), but economic pressures can limit their voluntary engagement (Ndunda, 2021).

In summary, education, gender equity, and household dynamics interact with age and marital status to shape community engagement patterns. Understanding these demographic nuances helps tailor education development programs that encourage inclusivity.

2.2.2 Social Factors and Community Participation

Social factors such as awareness, health status, and social networks strongly influence the level of community participation. Awareness ensures that individuals are informed about ongoing projects and understand their potential benefits (Fukuyama, 2020; Onchere, 2018). Communities with higher awareness levels often record stronger participation and accountability.

Health status affects both physical and cognitive ability to participate in development activities. Healthy individuals can attend meetings, contribute labor, and sustain involvement in long-term initiatives (Lin, 2021). Poor health reduces energy, mobility, and motivation, thus limiting engagement (Mwai, 2022).

Social networks enhance cooperation and trust among community members, providing platforms for mobilizing resources and knowledge exchange (Ngeno, 2019; Akinyemi, 2021). These networks—whether based on kinship, friendship, or shared interests—build solidarity and foster collective efficacy, which are essential for sustainable community-driven development.

These findings align with the Social Capital Theory, which posits that trust, reciprocity, and connectedness are prerequisites for successful collective action. Hence, the strength and quality of social ties directly affect how communities mobilize and manage education development projects.

2.2.3 Economic Factors and Community Participation

Economic conditions particularly income, employment, and asset ownership—play a critical role in community participation. Individuals with stable incomes are more likely to engage in community initiatives since they can afford time and resources for voluntary contributions (Ojong et al., 2020). Employment enhances self-efficacy and social responsibility, motivating individuals to invest in development activities (Atkinson, 2022).

Asset ownership, including land and livestock, gives individuals a sense of belonging and stability, encouraging them to support local initiatives (Ng'ang'a, 2021). Conversely, poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality limit participation, as people prioritize daily survival over long-term projects (Kinyua, 2021).

Economic empowerment programs have been found to improve community involvement by reducing dependency and creating financial security. Studies (Njeru, 2020; Mwangi, 2023) show that financial training, savings groups, and microcredit access increase citizens' capacity to contribute to collective efforts. These findings suggest that strengthening economic stability enhances participation in education-related projects by creating a sense of ownership and shared responsibility.

2.3 Summary of Literature Review

The reviewed literature establishes that demographic, social, and economic factors collectively shape community participation in education development projects. Demographic elements such as age, gender, marital status, and education influence engagement levels. Social factors including awareness, health, and social networks build trust and cooperation, while economic conditions determine the resources available for participation.

Social Capital Theory provides the conceptual basis for understanding these relationships, emphasizing that community participation thrives where trust, reciprocity, and connectedness exist. The integration of demographic diversity, social cohesion, and economic stability strengthens collective efforts and ensures sustainable educational development.

2.4. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study examined how demographic factors, social factors and community economic factors (independent variables) contribute to community participation (dependent variable) in local government education development projects. These interrelated factors work together to contribute the level and quality of community participation which is critical for successful local government initiatives.
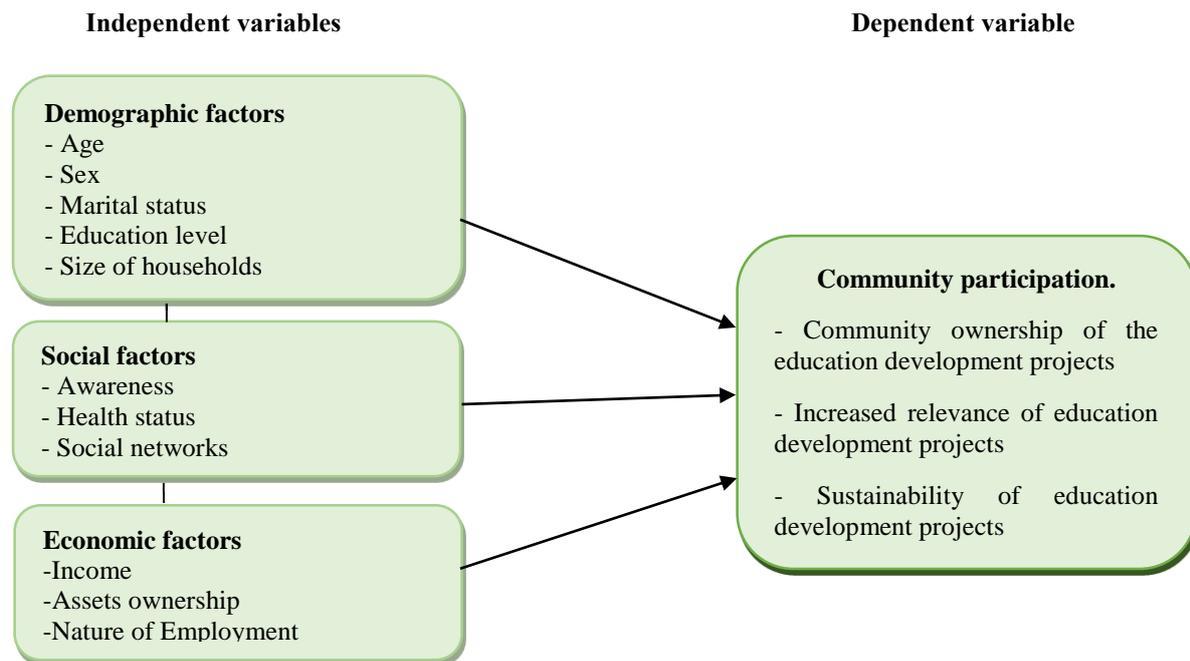
Independent variables   **Dependent variable**

Demographic factors
- Age
- Sex
- Marital status
- Education level
- Size of households

Social factors
- Awareness
- Health status
- Social networks

Economic factors
-Income
-Assets ownership
-Nature of Employment

Community participation.

- Community ownership of the education development projects

- Increased relevance of education development projects

- Sustainability of education development projects

Figure 2.1. Conceptual framework.

2.5. Research gap

The problem of limited community participation in Tanzania, particularly in areas like Sumbawanga-Rukwa, reveals a significant gap in research and understanding of the factors that contribute to such participation in local government education development projects. Whereas several studies have investigated the factors of community participation in other regions such as the United States, Nepal, Afghanistan and Kenya, there is a notable lack of studies focused on Tanzania, especially in Rukwa region (Hamisi and Ngusa, 2024).

According to Beery et al., (2023), existing studies have primarily explored various factors contributing participation, including collective decision-making, resource contributions, and cultural influences, but have paid deficient attention to aspects such as community social factors, economic levels, and demographic characteristics. These elements also play a central role in shaping the nature and dynamics of community involvement in local government education initiatives.

This gap underscores the need for target research in Tanzania, particularly within Sumbawanga Municipal Council, to better understand the specific determinants of community participation in local government education development projects. The study will help to come up with interventions aimed at effectively addressing these challenges and fostering collaborative efforts between the community and local government, ultimately leading to more responsive governance and initiatives that meet community needs.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Area of the Study

The study was conducted in **Sumbawanga Municipality**, Rukwa Region, Tanzania. Geographically, Sumbawanga lies at the intersection of major administrative and economic activities within the region, bordered by Sumbawanga Rural District to the north and east, Nkasi District to the west, and Kalambo District to the south. The Municipality includes two divisions, Lwiche and Itwelele comprising 19 wards, 24 villages, 165 streets, and 176 hamlets, covering **1,329 km²** with a total population of **303,986** (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

The economy is primarily agricultural, with maize, sorghum, and sunflower as the main crops. Small-scale businesses, industries, and livestock keeping also contribute to livelihoods. Despite these activities, the area faces challenges such as project delays, incompleteness, and low community participation.

The study focused on two purposively selected wards **Ntendo** and **Kizwite** selected due to issues of incomplete and delayed projects. The selection was based on challenges including corruption and limited community involvement identified in the background and problem statement.

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Unlike other regions previously studied, there is limited research on how social, economic, and demographic factors influence participation in Sumbawanga, making these wards suitable for detailed examination.

3.2 Research Approach

The study adopted a **mixed-methods approach**, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of determinants of community participation in education sector projects. This approach combines empirical measurement with exploration of lived experiences, ensuring stronger analytical validity (Lim, 2025).

The **quantitative component** involved semi-structured questionnaires administered to heads of households, capturing data on demographic, social, and economic variables. Quantitative data were analyzed statistically to determine participation patterns.

The **qualitative component** included in-depth interviews with key informants (and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in each ward. These provided contextual insights into motivations, challenges, and perceptions of participation. Methodological triangulation enhanced the study's credibility and enriched analysis (Schlunegge et al., 2024), producing a balanced understanding of the factors influencing participation in Sumbawanga's education projects.

3.3 Research Design

A **cross-sectional design** was employed to examine determinants of community participation in local government education projects. The design allows data collection at one point in time, making it efficient and cost-effective. It enabled analysis of relationships among awareness, demographic, social, and economic variables across various stakeholders, providing a clear snapshot of participation dynamics in line with the study objectives.

3.3.1 Target population

The target population of this study was 9,622 households from two wards namely Ntendo and Kizwite from which 50 households were sampled as study units (25 households from every ward).

3.4 Sample size and sampling techniques

3.4.1 Sample size

3.4.1.1 Qualitative sample size.

The qualitative sample size for this study involved 13 key informants including, 1 Municipal Education Officer, 2 Ward Education Officers, 2 Ward Executive Officers, 2 Mtaa Executive Officers, 2 school teachers, 2 members of school committees, and 2 village/mtaa leaders.

3.4.1.2 Quantitative sample size

The quantitative sample size for this study involved 50 heads of households drawn from 9,622 total households from two target wards using Yamane's formula (1967), calculated as follows;

$n = N / 1 + N(e)^2,$

Where;

n = sample size

N = population size

e = level of precision (sampling error)

Assumed the level of precision (margin of error) = 0.14 or 14% and given the total number of households = 9,622.

Then,

Sample size n = 9,622 / (1 + 9,622 x 0.14²)

n = 9,622 / (1 + 9,622 x 0.0196)

n = 9,622 / (1 + 188.5912)

n = 9,622 / 189.5912

n ≈ 50.75

Hence, the sample size for the study was 50 households.

Table 1: Sample size of the study

S/N	Sample Frame	Total
Qualitative sample		
1	Municipal Education Officer	1
2	Ward Education Officers	2
3	Ward Executive Officers	2
4	Mtaa Executive Officers	2
5	Mtaa Chairpersons	2
6	School teachers	2
7	Members of school committee	2
Total		**13**
Quantitative sample		
1	Heads of households	50
Total (Qualitative plus Quantitative)		**63**

3.4.1.3 Sampling Techniques

A **simple random sampling** method was used to pick the 50 heads of household respondents using ward residents' lists, facilitated by Ward Executive Officers. **Purposive selection** was applied for key informants from the municipal and ward levels, chosen for their experience with education development projects. This mixed approach ensured comprehensive representation and multiple perspectives.

3.5 Types and Sources of Data

Both **primary** and **secondary data** were collected to ensure comprehensive analysis.

3.5.1 Primary Data

Primary data included original quantitative and qualitative information gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and FGDs from community members and key informants (see Appendices I-III).

3.5.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data were obtained from journals, books, project reports, and municipal documents relevant to education development. These data contextualized primary findings and supported a broader understanding of participation effectiveness.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Three main methods were used to enhance accuracy and reliability through triangulation.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

Semi-structured questionnaires with both open- and closed-ended questions were administered to 50 heads of households, gathering demographic, social, and economic data (Appendix I).

3.6.2 Key Informant Interviews

In-depth interviews with 13 key informants including education officers, local leaders, and school committee members provided detailed insights into experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding participation (Appendix II).

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Four FGDs (two per ward) were conducted, each with 8 participants representing men, women, youth, and elders. The discussions explored shared experiences and factors influencing participation, guided by the FGD schedule (Appendix III).

3.6.4 Document Review

Relevant reports, journals, and government publications were reviewed to supplement field data. These provided context and validated primary findings but were not used as the main basis for analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Quantitative Analysis

Closed-ended questionnaire data were coded and analysed using **SPSS Version 25**. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) summarized trends, presented through tables and charts.

3.7.2 Qualitative Analysis

Interview and FGD responses were transcribed and analysed using **thematic analysis**, involving coding and grouping data into themes, then presented narratively.

3.8 Data Validity and Reliability

3.8.1 Validity

Validity ensures instruments measure intended concepts (Salleh et al., 2023). Multiple data collection methods—questionnaires, interviews, FGDs, and document reviews were used for triangulation. Tools were pre-tested to confirm clarity, relevance, and contextual suitability.

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability concerns consistency over time (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Standardized procedures, cross-checking responses, and a **pilot study** improved accuracy and dependability.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical measures protected participants and maintained research integrity. Informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality were ensured. Official approval letters were obtained from the **University of Iringa**, **Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS)**, and **Sumbawanga Municipal Council**.

Participants were briefed on the study's purpose, duration, and their right to withdraw at any time. Consent forms were read aloud before FGDs and interviews. Respondents were assured of anonymity and that data would remain confidential. They were informed that participation brought no direct personal benefits but would help improve education policy and project sustainability in their wards.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on the research objectives and questions at the onset of the exercise. The chapter includes the research variables with measured indicators, as responded by respondents, and further presents the results of the fieldwork.

4.2 Demographic factors of respondents

This objective described the demographic profiles of the 50 respondents involved in the study, focusing on their age, sex, marital status, education level and the size of households.

4.2.1 Age group of respondents

The respondents' ages ranged between 18 and 55 years. The findings indicated that 36% of respondents were in the age group between 26-35 years, 58% between 36-45 years, and 6% between 46-55 years (Table 2). The respondents were asked whether their ages had contributed to their level of participation in education development projects, and findings revealed that 90% of the respondents agreed that age had contributed to how they participated, while 10% reported that age had not contributed to their participation.

Table 2: Age group of respondents and its contribution to participation (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Per cent (%)
Age groups of respondents		
26-35	18	36
36-45	29	58
46-55	3	6
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents' age has contribution on participation		
Yes	45	90
No	5	10
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2025.

The findings indicated different views from respondents who reported that age had contributed to their participation on how age interacts with responsibilities, confidence, financial ability, and expectations within the community. They revealed that, for some respondents, age contributed as an advantage and a source of confidence in project involvement. The findings are similar to the argument of Sovacool *et al*., (2022), who found that younger populations often bring innovation, energy, and resilience into collective development efforts. This illustrated that, with increasing age, competing responsibilities and reduced physical capacity may limit participation.

The results were also supported by the findings from Meredith *et al*., (2023), who revealed that declining capability (functional capacity, pain, fear of injury), reduced opportunity (infrastructure, social supports, socio-cultural age stereotypes), and changing motivation (different priorities, emotion/affect tied to activities) all contribute to reducing participation in later life. In other words, aging reduces participation not only because of less energy but because of interacting physical, social, and environmental constraints that limit older people's ability and opportunity to engage.

Further, the findings from the respondents were noted to be similar to information reported by the Municipal Education Officer, who connected active participation with a specific age range that is seen as energetic and cooperative in community work, saying; "*I believe that those expected to participate in education projects are people aged between 18-45 since they are the ones we are cooperating within these projects by ideas and financially*" (Interview, July 2025).These findings reflected how social expectations in the community place responsibility for participation more heavily on people in younger and middle adulthood.

The study also revealed that ageing can change priorities from private demands to domestic and economic duties, reducing the time and energy available for participation in development projects. The findings are similar to the study by Torres and Serrat (2025), which revealed that transitions across the life course (retirement, onset of health problems, becoming a caregiver, changing household roles) rearrange people's time, obligations, and identities. From this view, older adults often reallocate energy toward family and private responsibilities because new or increased family roles demand time (childcare, eldercare, household income activities). Also, health or physical capacity can limit participation, and institutional arrangements (pension rules, local services) contribute to whether older people can remain publicly active. The study emphasized that these were dynamic, context-dependent processes; some older adults increase civic activity after retirement, while others reduce external participation because family or economic duties (and limited local supports) take up their time and energy.

Additionally, a school committee member from Ntendo complemented these findings when he shared that;

> "*Since I am old and I have a family to take care of, I spend much of my time on household responsibilities such as childcare and income-generating activities. It is different from when I was younger and did not have family roles. Back then, I had more free time to do what I wanted. Now, my focus is on taking care of my family and providing for them. Even though it can be hard, I know these responsibilities are important*" (Interview, July 2025).

The respondents who said that age had not contributed to their participation reported continued participation regardless of their age limitations. The findings revealed that, although advancing age could reduce physical capacity and increase competing responsibilities, participation was still maintained through a sense of responsibility, accumulated experience, and involvement in traditional approaches. The findings are supported by the insights provided by interview when a participant emphasized that advancing age did not remove their sense of duty and long-term interest in education;

> "*Even though I am older, I still have a responsibility to participate in education development because education has no end. I believe that learning helps everyone grow. I know that I still need its infrastructure for my future career. My involvement can make a difference for myself and others*" (Interview, July 2025).

The study found that some individuals maintain active involvement in community efforts regardless of age because of shared responsibility and long-term personal benefit. The findings suggested that age contributed to participation in different ways. While younger and middle-aged members are more actively engaged due to physical energy, financial strength, and fewer household burdens, older ones remain engaged through moral obligation, accumulated experience, and traditional means of participation.

4.2.2 Sex of respondents

The findings demonstrated that, 88% of respondents interviewed were men and only 12% were female (Table 3). When the respondents were asked if their sex (being male or female) contributed to how they took part in education development projects, more than half of them (54%) said that sex had contributed to their level of participation, while the remaining 46% said that their participation was not contributed to by their sex. They believed that anyone could take part equally and their sex had nothing to do with their participation in education projects in their areas.

These critical dynamic views by respondents resonate with Cookson *et al*., (2023) findings which revealed that, social norms and gendered power relations contribute to who attends meetings, who speaks, who is expected to take responsibility for school-related tasks, and who is considered a legitimate decision-maker. The study showed that these norms operate at multiple levels starting at household expectations (women's domestic care duties), community expectations (which tasks "suit" men or women), and institutional practices (who is invited or listened to). The findings by Unterhalter *et al*., (2022), insisted that, because these norms are collectively enforced and reproduced, simply measuring male versus female counts without understanding norms will under-explain differences in participation. The study insisted that, practically, this means sex-based differences in participation often reflect constraints (time poverty, mobility limits, caregiving burdens), differential access to information and networks, and unequal voice in decision spaces, all of which contribute to project design, sustainability, and equity.

It therefore suggested that, studying sex explicitly helps identify which barriers are normative (requiring social-change interventions), which are logistical (requiring scheduling, childcare, or transport solutions), and which are procedural (requiring inclusive meeting rules or quota mechanisms).

Table 3: Sex of respondents and its contribution to participation(n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex of respondents		
Male	44	88
Female	6	12
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents' sex has contribution on participation		
Yes	27	54
No	23	46
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2025.

More than a half (54%), of the respondents reported that sex contributed to their participation and provided different clarifications demonstrating how gender roles and household responsibilities contributed to their participation in education

development projects. The findings showed that in some households, men take the lead in participation, and women only attend when they are permitted to do so or when men are unavailable. Participation in this situation is contributed to by household authority and expectations around representation.

The information from discussions supported these findings; "*Men mostly participate in every activity except when they are not around, women can go to represent the household following the permission from their husbands*" (FGD, July 2025).

The study further found that family responsibilities, such as childcare and housework, take up the time women might otherwise use to participate. They also showed that the involvement of women contributes to the cooperation or approval of men in the household. The ward executive officer (WEO) pointed out during an interview how unpaid domestic work contributes to women's limited time for community involvement, saying;

> "*Most women are willing to participate in education activities, but they are usually busy with family duties like taking care of children and household work during meetings or project works. Unless men support them, their participation remains limited but they have great ideas and skills to share*" (Interview, July 2025).

These findings reflected how household roles and responsibilities contribute to who takes part and under what conditions. Women's participation is sometimes indirect, mediated through their spouses, or interrupted by expectations to remain at home. In contrast, men appear to have fewer restrictions in attending meetings or engaging in project labor and other means of participation. The report by UN Women Asia and the Pacific (2021), supports these findings that, globally, women perform at least two and a half times more unpaid care and domestic work than men. This unequal distribution results in a "double burden" for women, limiting their economic opportunities and full participation in society. The study emphasized the need to recognize and value unpaid care work through public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies, as well as promoting shared responsibilities within households.

On the contrary, the respondents who said their participation was not contributed to by sex shared experiences that showed participation as an individual responsibility rather than a gender role. They presented ability to contribute actively through manual labor, which they do not associate with gender limitations. These findings concurred with insights provided by the chairperson from Kizwite that;

> "*Sex cannot contribute anything to my participation in projects because education is provided to all (men and women), therefore it is important that I contribute to education development and as a man, I have been able to do or help with heavy work in the construction of school buildings*" (Interview, July 2025).

The findings showed that physical ability, rather than gender identity, contributed to respondents' participation. They further reflected an understanding of participation as a responsibility tied to the importance of education rather than sex. The results emphasized equal opportunity and duty rather than household role differences.

The study findings disclosed that some individuals saw participation in education projects as a personal obligation that is not limited by being male or female. Their participation relied on their willingness to contribute and their belief in the importance of education in the community.

Moreover, the study found that sex contributed to respondents' participation in different ways. For those who said it contributed, participation was connected to gender roles within the household, expectations of men as primary representatives, and women's responsibilities in childcare and domestic work. For those who said sex did not contribute, participation was instead connected to personal responsibility, physical ability, or the belief that education benefits everyone equally.

4.2.3 Marital status of respondents

The marital status of respondents showed that 78% of the respondents were married, while 22% were single (Table 4). The findings indicated that 60% of the respondents reported that their marital status had contributed to their level of participation in education development projects, while 40% stated that their participation was not connected to marital status. According

to Beselt *et al*., (2023), social variables such as marital status cannot be understood in isolation, but are lived realities that create opportunities and barriers for participation.

Table 4: Marital status of respondents and its influence to participation (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Marital status of respondents		
Single	11	22
Married	39	78
Total	**50**	**100**
Contribution of marital status on participation		
Yes	30	60
No	20	40
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2025.

The study found that marital status served as both a motivating and limiting factor depending on the respondent's situation. Some respondents described marriage as a source of responsibility and attachment to community projects because of children and shared benefits. Others explained that marriage reduced time and personal availability due to household duties. There were also respondents who said that responsibilities could be shared among family members as a way to maintain involvement.

These findings align with the results reported by the Institute for Research on Poverty (2023), which showed that partnered mothers (married or cohabiting) reported more housework and less leisure time compared to non-partnered mothers. The findings suggested that marriage can reduce personal availability due to increased household responsibilities. However, the study also noted that having another adult in the household, regardless of marital status, generally reduced mothers' time spent on housework and childcare, showing that shared responsibilities can ease some burdens.

Respondents who agreed their marital status had contributed to their participation provided different experiences showing how marriage can add to time, motivation, and involvement. The results noted that participation was in other ways linked to a sense of responsibility and long-term benefit for their children and community. The Kizwite secondary school master emphasized these findings during an interview when he reported that marriage created a strong reason to stay active in project efforts, stating; "*It motivates me to participate fully since I know these projects will benefit my children and the community at large*" (Interview, July 2025). These findings suggested that being married can contribute to stronger commitment because some individuals see the outcomes of these projects as directly connected to their family's welfare. Participation in this case was seen as an investment in children's future rather than just a voluntary activity.

Moreover, the study found from the discussions that marriage limited the time community members had for participating in community initiatives when marriage roles demanded attention that reduced the ability to attend or follow up on these activities;

> "*Women do not get enough time to follow up on ongoing projects in their living area, because they are tied with marriage roles. They spend most of their times taking care of their husbands and family. These responsibilities make them too busy and leave them with very limited chances to attend meetings and participate in education activities*" (FGD, July 2025).

These views and perceptions pointed out how responsibilities in the household reduced opportunities to engage in public projects. Time that could be used for attending meetings or project activities was spent on caregiving and domestic duties. Other respondents presented marriage as something that could be shared between family members in relation to participation, saying that duties could be delegated among spouses or children.

However, 40% of respondents believed that participation in education projects should continue regardless of marital status because community projects follow their schedules and expectations. Some of them believed that community projects continue according to planned schedules that do not change depending on individual marital conditions. This experience showed that participation is guided more by collective arrangements than by personal life situations. Other respondents

connected marriage with increased cooperation rather than restriction, explaining that having a spouse created a space for them to participate in community collective activities.

These findings showed that some married participants felt supported rather than limited by their marital responsibilities, and this encouraged their involvement in education development projects.

The study further found that the contribution of marital status depended on how individuals managed household roles, cooperation within families, and their own sense of responsibility toward children and the community. The findings agreed with the study by George (2025), who emphasized that women's participation is crucial for sustainable development, yet they often face barriers due to traditional gender roles and marital expectations. The study stressed the importance of considering marital status and household dynamics when assessing women's involvement in community projects, suggesting that these factors can either help or hinder their participation.

These findings were similar to explanations from discussions that connected participation to long-term obligation to children's wellbeing, showing a belief that participation is necessary even when responsibilities at home are demanding, because the outcomes of the projects matter to the future of their children. The discussions revealed that there was continued engagement regardless of marriage duties;

> "*We see these projects as important investments for our children's future. That is why, even when it becomes tough for us, we must still be present. No matter how much our marital duties require us to be at home, we try to make time. We believe our children will benefit from what we are building today*" (FGD, July 2025).

4.2.4 Education level of respondents

Understanding how people's education levels relate to their involvement in education development projects helps to explain the differences in awareness, motivation, and sense of responsibility among community members (Oe and Ochiai, 2022). The respondents' education levels included non-formal education, primary education, secondary education, vocational training, college/university degree and other levels. The findings showed that 38% of respondents had completed secondary education, 26% had attained primary education, 22% reported holding diplomas or certificates, and 14% had achieved a college or university degree.

Table 5: Education level of respondents and its contribution to participation (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Education level of respondents		
Primary education	13	26
Secondary education	19	38
College/university degree	7	14
Others (Diploma and certificate)	11	22
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents' education level has contribution on participation		
Yes	29	58
No	14	28
Not sure	7	14
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2025.

Respondents were asked if their levels of education contributed to their participation in education projects. About 58% of the respondents reported that their education level had contributed to their participation, 28% said it had not contributed, and 14% were not sure. These differences showed that educational background is viewed by many as a factor that adds to people's willingness and confidence to take part in education development projects, while others see participation as something that can be done by anyone, regardless of schooling.

The study found that community members' previous learning experience encouraged them to contribute to projects that can help others benefit in the same way. In this case, education becomes a source of inspiration and a personal reason to stay involved. The findings suggested that having formal education contributed to community members' understanding of why educational development is important and encouraged them to join projects willingly. They also pointed out that some people with limited schooling feel disconnected from such activities because they believe they are not meant for them.

During the interview with mtaa executive officer (MEO), she concurred to these findings when she said;

> "*As I am educated, I always volunteer in supporting education projects since I understand the value of education. I know that these projects are important for children and the whole community. While those with no or lower education levels often do not participate fully, they sometimes see little benefit for themselves. Some even think such projects do not favor them, so they keep a distance. But for me, I believe education helps everyone, directly or indirectly*" (Interview, July 2025).

These findings are supported by Halverson (2024), who revealed that, formal schooling increased people's civic knowledge, critical awareness of public problems, and the skills needed to work with institutions. That cognitive and informational boost made educated people more likely to recognize the importance of education projects, see how they can contribute, and feel that their contributions will matter (higher political/civic efficacy). The study argued that education contributes to how people understand projects (they "see" the value) and builds a sense of personal ability, which encourages voluntary engagement.

The findings of this study further, noted that some community members do not see themselves as responsible for education development projects, especially when they have low education. These findings highlighted how education contributed to perceptions of responsibility. People with limited schooling may not feel they have a role to play, leading them to step back from activities that require collective support.

The ward education officer supported these findings when he said;

> "*Many community members, especially those with no or low education, see education development projects as the work of the government and local leaders. They do not think it is their role to support and help. They believe it is the leaders' responsibility to make schools and other education services better. Most of them wait for instructions from leaders. Because of this, they often do not join or take part in these projects*" (Interview, July 2025).

Furthermore, the study noted that education alone did not determine community participation. Instead, people participated when they understood the project's goals and felt ready, regardless of their education level. These findings are supported by insights provided from both interviews and discussions. A school committee member emphasized that; "My education level has not contributed to my participation because all I know is that no matter whether *you are educated or not, you have roles to play in education projects around your area for the benefit of your generation*" (Interview, July 2025). Additionally, the insights from discussions stressed the importance of awareness rather than schooling, noting that;

> "*Participation in education projects is not only about education level. It depends on the awareness and readiness of each person. Even people with no education can take part if they are involved. Projects need both educated and non-educated people to work together. So, everyone can contribute if they understand the project and feel to help*" (FGD, July 2025).

The findings are similar to the study by McMullen *et al*., (2020), which found that mechanisms that build awareness, clarify roles, and deliberately create capacity (training, outreach, co-design) are central to producing meaningful participation, whereas simple demographic predictors (such as average formal education level in a community) were often weak predictors of whether people became engaged.

The study showed that programs investing in making projects understandable, relevant, and accessible tend to increase participation, regardless of participants' formal education. These findings indicate that the meaning of participation comes from how individuals view education, their own abilities, and their role in collective activities.

4.2.5 The size of the household of the respondents

The study revealed that most respondents lived in households with a medium number of family members. The results showed that 52% of respondents stayed in homes with between four and six people. This suggested that more than half of the respondents were not in very small or very large households.

About 26% said they lived in small households with one to three members, showing that about a quarter of the respondents had fewer people in their homes. The remaining 22% lived in large households made up of seven to ten members. This group was the smallest compared to the others (Table 6).

Table 6: Rrespondent's' household size and its contribution to participation (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent(%)
Size of household of respondents		
1-3	13	26
4-6	26	52
7-10	11	22
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents' size of household has contribution on participation		
Yes	18	36
No	32	64
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2025

The data from Table 6 revealed that, when asked whether household size contributed to their participation in education development projects, 36% of respondents said it did, while 64% reported that their participation was not connected to the number of people in their households. The responses from both sides explained different lived situations.

The study found that, among the respondents who reported that household size contributed to their participation, some connected large households with many daily responsibilities that take priority over education activities. The findings also showed that financial pressure in bigger households could limit attention and time for project participation, while domestic roles such as childcare needs reduced the community members' ability to join meetings or activities connected to educational projects in the study area. The information from discussions agreed with these findings when reported; "*Large households often carry significant needs for food, clothing, health, and school fees, which most of times prioritize daily needs over educational project activitie*" (FGD, July 2025).

On the contrary, not all explanations among those who said household size contributed to their participation focused on burdens. The findings showed how a small household allowed flexibility, but also pointed out that larger families may have an advantage in organizing labor. The study noted that, some people saw larger households as better positioned to send members to participate because they could share tasks. A village chairperson from Ntendo provided a similar notion to these findings during an interview when noted that;

> "*My household is small and has nothing to disturb my participation in education projects, but I believe large households have greater ability as they ensure labor is always available for participation since they can divide roles; some join project work while others manage household duties*" (Interview, July 2025).

The study further found that participation is seen as part of responsibility toward children's futures, and household duties are managed alongside project involvement. Meanwhile, some people viewed participation as a choice connected to awareness rather than household conditions. The findings however revealed that, respondents who said household size did not contribute to their participation focused more on personal commitment rather than the number of family members.

These findings showed how household size contributed differently to community participation in education development projects. Some people with large households had more responsibilities and limited time, while others found ways to share

duties or still chose to participate because of personal commitment. They also noted that small households might give individuals more freedom, but some believed that larger households have more helping hands. These findings from the respondents were noted to be similar with information reported by the school committee member, explaining that;

> "*My family roles and participating in education development projects are different two roles that all need me, hence I try harder to make sure I meet all the roles because I know education infrastructures are necessary for my children's development*" (Interview, July 2025).

The Municipal Education Officer emphasized these findings focusing on belief and understanding as the reason for participation, regardless of household size, insisting;

> "*I do not believe that the number of children or size of the households can be the challenge for someone to participate, participation is just the matter of individual to understand the relevance of such projects and commit him/herself towards such projects*" (Interview, July 2025).

These findings suggested that participation, therefore, was contributed to not only by the number of people in a household but also by how individuals prioritize responsibilities, share roles, and value the importance of education development activities in their areas.

4.3 Social factors influencing participation in education development projects

The second objective of the study was to examine the social factors contributing to community participation in education development projects in the study area. The variables that were assessed include community awareness, health status and social networks.

4.3.1 Awareness and participation in education development projects

The findings showed that most of the respondents were aware of education sector development projects implemented in their areas. Most of the respondents, (76%) reported being aware of such projects in their wards, while 24% stated that they were not aware.

Table 7: Respondents' awareness and its contribution to participation in education projects (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Respondents are aware on education projects		
Yes	38	76
No	12	24
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents means of getting awareness	**n=38**	
Community meetings	26	42.6
Local government announcements	12	19.6
Religious institutions	14	22.9
Word of mouth from other community members	9	14.7
Total		**100**

Some respondents gave more than one answer, hence analysis based on multiple responses.

 Source: Field data, 2025.

The findings showed that information about education development projects spread through different channels. Community meetings were the most common source, followed by religious institutions, local government announcements, and word of mouth among neighbors and friends. This reflected that awareness among community members in the study area was not accidental but connected to organized communication efforts within the community.

Table 8: Respondents participation in education projects (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Respondents participate in education projects		
Yes	50	100
No	0	0
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents means of participation in education projects	**n=50**	
Attending meetings	33	45.2
Contributing financially	16	21.9
Providing labor or materials	24	32.8
Total		**100**

Some respondents gave more than one answer, hence analysis based on multiple responses.

Source: Field data, 2025.

The study found that 100% of the respondents participated in education development projects in their areas. However, their forms of involvement differed by activity. It was noted that respondents participated in ways that matched their abilities, time, and resources.

Attendance at meetings was the most reported form of participation, followed by the provision of labor or materials, and financial contributions. During an interview with a Ward Executive Officer (WEO), she described why attending activities such as planning or discussion meetings was important, noting:

> "*Not everyone can give money to contribute for the projects, but most people try to make time to attend meetings. They also share their ideas during these meetings. By doing this, they feel they are part of the projects, even without money, their participation matters a lot*" (Interview, July 2025).

This experience highlighted that participation did not always depend on material or financial ability but rather on a sense of involvement fostered by awareness.

The study also revealed that awareness contributed to participation by informing people about where, when, and how to get involved in education project activities. Majority of respondents (76%) who reported awareness suggested that access to information contributed to greater involvement. Community meetings appeared to serve as both awareness channels and spaces of engagement, as shown by the high number of respondents who reported learning about education projects through them. Insights from discussions also supported these findings; "*Most of us hear about school development activities through ward meetings where leaders explain what is needed and how each household can contribute*" (FGD, July 2025). This demonstrated that awareness did not occur passively but through structured platforms where project details, expectations, and responsibilities were introduced.

The findings are similar to the study by Kapuya *et al.*, (2024), which emphasized that when citizens are equipped with information, they are better positioned to voice their opinions and hold local leaders accountable, thereby enhancing citizen engagement. The study insisted that informed communities are more likely to take part in governance processes, highlighting the contribution of awareness in promoting effective participation.

The findings further suggested that awareness also contributed to motivation by showing individuals in the study area that their involvement mattered. Information from community meetings, religious gatherings, announcements, and neighbor discussions gave respondents a clear picture of the projects' direction and needs. Those who were informed became part of these processes through physical attendance or material support.

The study also found that, even when contribution levels varied, knowing about the existence and importance of education development projects created entry points for community members' involvement. Further, the channels of awareness also showed that the spread of information was community-based rather than dependent on individual effort. Meetings and religious institutions provided structured platforms where leaders, faith-based representatives, or community members shared project-related responsibilities. This collective approach to awareness helped reduce the chances of excluding people based on income, social standing, or education. Word of mouth also contributed by circulating project details informally among neighbors, friends, and relatives.

The findings furthermore suggested that, the link between awareness and participation is visible in how activities such as attending meetings (45.2%), providing labor or materials (32.8%), and contributing financially (21.9%) aligned with how respondents received information in the study area. Those who attended meetings were likely to remain informed and active. People who contributed labor or materials responded to communicated needs and expectations. Those who donated money did so after being informed of the required financial contributions and the goals of the projects. Moreover, the study indicated that awareness contributed as a foundation for participation by helping people to understand not only that education projects existed, but also that they were expected to be part of them. The insights and perceptions shared by respondents showed that once information reached them clearly, participation followed through different channels of involvement.

4.3.2 Health and participation on education development projects

The health status of the respondents showed that 14% rated their health as very good, while the majority, 86%, reported being in good health. None of the respondents reported having a physical disability or long-term health condition that limited their ability to participate in education development projects. Similarly, no respondent indicated that any household member had experienced a health condition that stopped them from taking part in community education activities.

Majority of respondents, 92% believed that health status should be considered when involving community members in education development projects, whereas 8% did not view it as a factor that should contribute to participation.

Table 9: Respondents' health statuss and its contribution to participation in education projects(n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Health status of respondents		
Very good	7	14
Good	43	86
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents have physical disability or long-term health conditions		
Yes	0	0
No	50	100
Total	**50**	**100**
There were conditions that prevented other household members from participation		
Yes	0	0
No	50	100
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents agree on consideration of health statuses on participation in education projects		
Yes	46	92
No	4	8
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2025.

The findings showed that most respondents reported being physically able to contribute to education development projects, and no health-related limitations were recorded among them or their household members. Although none of the participants

indicated having a physical disability or chronic illness that restricted their involvement, many still expressed that their health status contributed to how people participate. A substantial majority (92%) felt that individuals' physical abilities should be recognized when assigning roles to ensure meaningful involvement without causing harm or exclusion.

Respondents who supported considering health status provided explanations reflecting their experiences and expectations in community work, suggesting how good health contributed to participation. The findings highlighted the need to match responsibilities with capacity so that participation is inclusive rather than dismissive of certain community members. Furthermore, the findings show that health is not only seen as physical ability but also as a resource that contributes to attendance, labor contribution, and follow-up in project processes.

The study also revealed that health contributed to practical involvement, especially in tasks that demand physical strength. Respondents also suggested that participation is possible for individuals in different conditions when roles are allocated fairly. The information provided by the mtaa chairperson supported these findings when he remarked;

> "*My good health allows me participate in education projects by giving labor and going to meetings, but when projects need hard physical work, people who have health problems should not do heavy tasks. They should be given lighter work that fits their health conditions. This way, everyone can join and support in some way. Health should be considered when deciding what work a person is going to do*" (Interview, July 2025).

The participant (MEO) emphasized the importance of using health awareness to organize roles effectively, explaining; "*Health helps to know who can do what kind of work, or who cannot work at all, to ensure everyone participates appropriately*" (Interview, July 2025).

The findings are supported by the study of Birgel (2023), which revealed that health is not only a physical attribute but a multifaceted resource that contributed to participation in community initiatives. Aligning the roles with individual capacities ensures that all community members can contribute meaningfully, thereby fostering inclusive and effective project outcomes.

Further, the findings of this study noted that participation is not limited to physical involvement and that people with different health conditions may contribute through other forms such as ideas, knowledge, or guidance. This is supported by respondents who did not think health status should contribute to participation (8%), providing clear justifications through explanations showing that people with health challenges can still contribute in meaningful ways that do not depend on physical strength.

The findings suggested that, health status contributed to how individuals see their ability to engage and the types of tasks they can handle. They portrayed health as a factor that contributed to role allocation, presence during project meetings, and level of physical involvement. Even without reported cases of disability or illness among respondents or household members, perceptions demonstrated that consideration of health can help ensure fair participation without excluding those who may not perform physically demanding work. The insights from discussions aligned with these findings when marked:

> "*Even someone with bad health can play part in education projects by providing experience and ideas. The only areas they cannot participate may involve providing labor, attending meetings, or giving financial contributions depending on the nature of their health conditions*" (FGD, July 2025).

4.3.3 Social networks and participation in education development projects

According to Singh and Moody (2022), understanding the role of social networks in community participation in education development projects helps to explain how social interactions, group memberships, and peer support contribute to individuals' awareness, motivation, and engagement in local initiatives. Social networks include formal and informal groups such as neighborhood associations, religious groups, farmer groups, women's groups, youth associations, or other community-based organizations. The findings showed that all respondents (100%) reported being members of at least one social group or organization within their communities (Table 10). Membership in social networks contributed to interaction, information sharing, and collective decision-making among community members.

Table 10: Social networks of respondents and their contribution to participation in education projects (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Respondents are the members of social networks		
Yes	50	100
No	0	0
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents' social networks discuss on/get involved in education projects		
Yes	0	0
No	33	66
Sometimes	17	34
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents discuss with neighbors and friends on education project matters		
Yes	39	78
No	11	22
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2025

The findings showed that, despite all respondents being members of social networks, the groups' participation in education development projects was limited. Only 34% of the respondents reported that their social groups sometimes discussed or joined local education projects, while 66% reported no involvement. This indicated that while social networks exist, not all contributed to education development activities.

Interaction beyond formal groups also contributed, as a majority of respondents (78%) reported that they often discuss community issues, including education, with neighbors and friends, while only 22% said they do not. These informal networks contributed to sharing information and creating opportunities for collaborative action. These findings align with Iyengar (2021), who highlighted that while formal groups and organizations are important for educational development, their effectiveness often depends on informal networks. Informal networks, such as family, friends, and neighbors, contributed to spreading information, building trust, and encouraging community efforts towards education initiatives.

Table 11: Contribution of social networks to participation (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Respondents' social networks contribute on awareness and participation in education projects		
Yes	41	82
No	9	18
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents believe that strong social networks contribute to active participation in education development projects		
Yes	42	84
Not sure	8	16
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2025

The study also found that most respondents (82%), reported that their social connections contributed to their awareness and participation in education development projects. This showed that individuals with active connections were more likely to know about education initiatives and participate. Group discussions and encouragement contributed to participation by creating shared understanding, boosting confidence, and motivating members to act together. A school committee member during an interview expressed a similar view;

> "*My group helps me to know about and participate in education projects because we motivate each other on the best ways of education attainment and improving school infrastructure. We also share ideas and encourage one another to take part in different school activities. This support makes it easier for everyone to contribute in a useful way*" (Interview, July 2025).

When asked whether community members with strong social networks are more likely to participate in education development projects, 84% of respondents agreed, while 16% were not sure. The study found that social networks contributed as platforms for mobilization, knowledge sharing, and peer encouragement. Members of strong networks participated more because discussions and support created a sense of responsibility and shared purpose.

Insights from interviews and discussions supported these findings, emphasizing that stronger networks contributed to collective decision-making and mutual encouragement, which enhanced participation. One participant said; "*I believe community members with stronger social networks participate more in education projects because they make decisions together and accomplish them collectively*" (Interview, July 2025). Additionally, discussions from FGD's emphasized; "*Those with stronger social ties participate more in education projects. They strongly encourage others in the community to take part in education. They also motivate people to join other development projects for the benefit of their generations*" (FGD, July 2025).

The study also found that strong and active networks contributed to increasing awareness, motivation, and collective action, encouraging members to join education projects. Informal discussions with neighbors and friends reinforced knowledge sharing and readiness to participate. Conversely, when group decisions discouraged engagement, individuals refrained from participating despite their personal willingness.

These dynamics showed that social networks contributed both as enablers and regulators of community participation in education development initiatives. Information from discussions insights supported these results when highlighted:

> "*Sometimes these groups can take down members' motivation to participate in projects, since mostly individuals are guided by group decisions rather than self-esteem. If the group decides not to participate, then even those few who were ready to join stay back*" (FGD, July 2025).

This observation revealed that group contribution is not always positive; group norms and decisions can either encourage or limit individual participation.

4.4 Economic factors contributing to participation in education development projects

Economic level of respondents was the third objective investigated in this study within the study area. The variables assessed included respondent's income, asset ownership, and nature of employment.

4.4.1 Income and participation in education development projects

The respondents' income levels varied significantly, reflecting differences in financial capacity within the community. The findings indicated that 72% of the respondents reported earning between TZS 100,001-00,000 per month, 18% earned between TZS 300,001-500,000, and only 10% earned above TZS 500,001 per month.

Table 12: Income of respondents and its contribution to participation (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Income of respondents		
100,001-300,000	36	72
300,000-500,000	9	18
500,001 and above	5	10
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents' income sources	**n=50**	
Formal employment (government/private sector).	8	7.4
Informal business (small business, vending, etc.)	36	33.3
Agriculture	43	39.8
Livestock keeping	21	19.4
Total		**100**

Some respondents gave more than one answer, hence analysis based on multiple responses.

Source: Field data, 2025.

The findings showed that the respondents' income was generated from multiple sources, showing economic diversity in the community. Agriculture was cited by 39.8% of respondents, informal business by 33.3%, livestock keeping by 19.4%, and formal employment by 7.4%. This distribution of income sources highlighted that most community members rely on small-scale or self-managed economic activities, which contributed to their ability to participate in community projects.

Table 13: Contribution of income to participation (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Respondents' income has contribution on participation in education projects		
Yes	39	78
No	11	22
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2025.

When the respondents were asked whether their income contributed to their ability to participate in education development projects, 78% indicated that it did, while 22% reported that it did not. These findings demonstrated that for the majority (78%), financial resources contributed to the ways they got involved. The study found that respondents' income provided both practical support through money and confidence for them to participate more actively in education development projects. Higher earnings allowed individuals to participate in multiple ways, including monetary contributions and decision-making, whereas limited income meant that participation required other forms of involvement.

These findings were supported by information given by the mtaa executive officer (MEO), who highlighted the substitution of financial contributions when physical participation was limited, saying; "*Most of community members who fail to participate physically in education activities due to different reasons, they give financial contributions as a substitute*" (Interview, July 2025). Additionally, the school committee member complemented the findings, noting that higher income contributed to both his capacity and influence in education project activities:

> "*When I have higher income, it makes me stronger to contribute to education projects in my ward. It also helps me take part in making decisions about these projects as I can support them more, especially by contributing money. Income gives me confidence to support in different ways*" (Interview, July 2025).

On the other hand, the respondents who reported that their income did not contribute to their participation (22%) offered a different perspective. The findings highlighted that community members can still participate meaningfully through labor, advice, or planning even with limited economic resources. Personal motivation, sense of responsibility, and commitment to communal goals contributed to overcoming low income.

Insights from discussions reinforced these results; "*Income does not affect people's participation because they can fully participate in these education projects in different ways, including contributing ideas, opinions, and labor*" (FGD, July 2025). The findings suggested a recurring theme that income contributed to participation in both direct and indirect ways. Financial capacity allowed individuals to contribute materially, which could enhance their visibility and influence in project activities. At the same time, community members with limited income could still participate through non-monetary means, demonstrating that participation is also supported by willingness, commitment, and alternative forms of contribution.

4.4.2 Assets ownership and participation in education development projects

The findings indicated that the majority of respondents reported owning land (37.5%) and houses (27.9%), while ownership of motor vehicles or motorcycles was 11.5% and agricultural tools (2.9%) was comparatively low. Some respondents reported multiple types of assets, reflecting diversified ownership patterns in the community. Most respondents, 74%, when asked whether owning assets contributed to their participation in education development projects, stated that their assets did not contribute, while only 26% reported that asset ownership contributed to their involvement.

Table 14: Respondents assets ownership and its contribution to participation (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Respondents' assets ownership	**n=50**	
Land	39	37.5
Livestock	21	20.1
House	29	27.9
Motor vehicle or motorcycle	12	11.5
Agricultural tools or machinery	3	2.9
Total		**100**
Respondents' assets ownership has contribution on participation in education projects		
Yes	13	26
No	37	74
Total	**50**	**100**

Some respondents gave more than one answer, hence analysis based on multiple responses.

Source: Field data, 2025.

These findings presented in Table 14 showed that assets, particularly those with tangible or locational value such as land or houses, can contribute to participation by enabling respondents to make material contributions and by establishing their visibility in the community. They demonstrated that assets can serve as both a practical resource and a social marker that connects individuals to development initiatives.

The study by Emery and Flora (2021) noted that communities possess various forms of capital such as natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and built that can be used for development. It also insisted that, among these, built capital, which includes physical assets like land and infrastructure, plays a key role in contributing to community dynamics. Investments in built capital can enhance other forms of capital, such as social and human capital, thereby supporting community participation. Evidence from the ward education officer agreed with these findings; "*Owning assets enabled me to contribute in education development projects, as I donated stones trip for the construction of classes at Ntendo primary school*" (Interview, July 2025).

On the contrast, respondents who reported that their assets did not contribute to their participation explained that ownership of property or resources was not directly linked to their involvement in education development projects. These findings showed that, for many community members, assets are mainly seen as personal resources rather than tools for participating in community projects. Interview data supported this as the school master noted;

> "*My assets do not motivate me to participate since they are not directly related to participation in education projects*" (Interview, July 2025). Another participant added, "*I acquired my property for my own living, not for supporting development initiatives, and therefore it does not contribute to my participation*" (Interview, July 2025).

The findings suggested that, while ownership may theoretically provide a way to contribute, very few community members actually use their assets for material contributions. The findings were similar to those by Phuangsuwan *et al.*, (2025), who found that, while communities often engage in school management, their participation is mainly in areas like monitoring and maintaining school facilities rather than in direct material contributions. This indicated that communities tend to take part in less resource-demanding activities, possibly due to limits in time, money, or other resources.

4.4.3 Nature of employment and participation in education development projects

The respondents reported different forms of employment, which contributed to how they participated in education development projects in their communities. Out of the 50 participants, 58% were self-employed, 26% were temporarily or casually employed, and 16% held permanent positions in either the government or private sector. These findings indicated that most respondents depended on informal or flexible economic activities for their livelihoods rather than structured salaried employment.

Table 15: Respondents' nature of employments and its contribution to participation (n=50)

Parameters	Frequency	Percent (%)
Respondents' nature of employment		
Permanently employed (government/private sector)	8	16
Self-employed	29	58
Temporarily/casually employed	13	26
Total	**50**	**100**
Work schedules of the respondents		
Full-time (more than 30 hrs/week)	17	34
Part-time (less than 30 hrs/week)	11	22
Occasional or seasonal	9	18
No fixed time	13	26
Total	**50**	**100**
Respondents' employment nature has contribution on participation in education projects		
Yes	24	48
No	17	34
Not sure	9	18
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field data 2025

The nature of employment was also reflected in their daily and weekly work schedules. As shown in Table 15, about 34% worked full-time (more than 30 hours weekly), 22% worked part-time (less than 30 hours weekly), 18% were engaged seasonally or occasionally, and 26% had no fixed working time. These findings revealed that, for many respondents, work routines were unpredictable or demanding, which contributed to the amount of time they could dedicate to local education projects.

The contribution of employment conditions to participation was further shown when respondents were asked whether their nature of employment contributed to how they involved in these activities. Nearly half (48%) said their employment contributed to their participation, while 34% said it did not, and 18% were unsure. The explanations provided by respondents who said employment contributed to their participation highlighted time constraints, physical absence, and conflicting schedules as the main challenges. These findings showed that, tight or inflexible work routines, even among those who are not permanently employed, can compete with time that might be given to community initiatives.

The study found that the issue is not unwillingness, but the practical limitation created by work schedules, thus even when interest is present, work obligations limit physical attendance in meetings, construction efforts, or planning sessions. The findings resonate with the information given by the Municipal education officer who said; "*I really like to participate in these projects physically so that I can give my ideas and opinions, but I fail because of my working schedules*" (Interview, July 2025). Another participant who experienced similar challenges stated;

> "*Most of the activities related to education projects are conducted when I am at work, and even when arranged during weekends, most of the time I find myself at work, so it's so hard for me to physically participate, but for sure I really wish I could participate*," (Interview, July 2025).

Respondents who said employment did not contribute to limiting their participation described alternative ways of contributing or strategies they used to stay involved. Their responses showed how some individuals create room for participation despite work demands. The findings demonstrated how some individuals make adjustments such as evening involvement, reallocating time, or offering material support when they cannot attend physically. They also showed that work commitments do not completely remove the sense of responsibility to contribute.

The findings were similar to the information reported during interview when a participant explained;

> "*When I am occupied with work schedules, I still contribute financially, and when it is very necessary, I allocate extra time to participate*" (Interview, July 2025). Another participant reported; "*After working hours, I can participate in education projects whenever needed and possible*" (Interview, July 2025).

The findings by Liodaki (2024), supported these findings as identified "lack of time due to work obligations" as the primary barrier to employees' participation in educational programs. Other significant barriers included participation costs and family responsibilities. The study categorized these barriers as situational, institutional, and dispositional, emphasizing that external factors like work commitments often outweigh personal willingness.

The study found that employment nature contributed not just to the frequency of participation, but also to the mode through which individuals contribute either physically, financially, or through negotiated time. It was also noted that employment is not simply a background characteristic, but a factor that contributes to availability, timing, and the form of participation. The findings revealed how participation becomes possible or difficult depending on how working time intersects with scheduled community activities.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of findings

The findings showed that community participation in education sector development projects in the studied wards of Sumbawanga Municipal Council is influenced by a mix of demographic, social, and economic factors. Important demographic factors such as age, sex, marital status, education level, and household size play a major role in shaping both the level and type of participation. For example, age was found to strongly affect involvement, with older members showing greater willingness to contribute. Gender differences revealed that traditional roles still reduce the active involvement of women in some cases. In the same way, higher education levels increased people's awareness and readiness to support projects, showing that demographic diversity matters in strengthening community participation.

Social relationships within the community also appeared as strong drivers of participation. When people had close social networks and a shared sense of responsibility, they were more likely to give their time, labor, and ideas to education development projects. Strong ties encouraged members to attend meetings, work together, and take part in decision-making, which helped to increase inclusiveness and the feeling of ownership of these projects.

The findings also highlighted that economic conditions are key in shaping participation. Household income, type of employment, and ownership of assets all influenced the ability and willingness of people to be involved. Those with stable income and assets were able to provide financial support and materials, while those with limited resources mainly contributed through labor and voluntary work. This shows that economic empowerment builds the strength for long-term involvement in education projects.

5.2 Conclusions

Demographic characteristics have greatly contributed to community participation in education sector development projects within Sumbawanga Municipal Council. The findings showed that middle-aged people were more active in project activities compared to younger or older groups. Education level also contributed positively, as those with higher education were more aware and confident to take part in planning and decision-making. Gender differences were noted, where men mostly contributed through financial and physical support, while women often shared ideas and took part in meetings. Married people were found to coordinate family and community resources to support school projects. This shows that demographic characteristics play an important role in shaping how different groups participate and contribute to education development projects.

Social factors such as awareness, health condition, and social networks made a strong contribution to people's participation. Community members who were more aware of ongoing education projects were more likely to attend meetings, volunteer, or give resources. Good health enabled people to work physically in project activities, while sickness limited participation. Strong social networks, including community groups and friendships, encouraged collective action and trust, which helped more people to join and contribute to project success.

Economic factors including income level, asset ownership, and nature of employment contributed significantly to the way people participated in education projects. Those with higher and stable income were able to provide money or materials and attend planning meetings. People with lower income mostly contributed through manual work and other non-financial ways. Asset ownership, such as owning land or a house, increased confidence and ability to support school projects. The type of employment also mattered; people with permanent or regular jobs participated more actively compared to those with

seasonal or informal work, who often lacked time or resources. The study also concludes that community participation in education development projects depends on the combined contribution of demographic, social, and economic factors. When these factors are favorable, people are more willing and able to take part in improving education facilities and outcomes in their communities.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for Local Government Authorities (LGAs)

Local Government Authorities (LGAs), through the Municipal Director's office and ward executive offices, should increase community awareness about education projects using simple and accessible means such as village meetings, local radio, posters, and social media. They should also conduct regular training for teachers, school boards, and local leaders on participatory planning, project management, and transparency. These efforts will help communities contribute more effectively to decision-making and project outcomes. LGAs should also create open forums and suggestion platforms where citizens can share their ideas and follow project progress. Furthermore, the municipal authority should ensure that women and youth contribute fully by setting friendly meeting times and providing safe, supportive spaces for their participation.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Community Members

Community members should take an active part in meetings, training, and awareness programs arranged by local leaders. They should contribute ideas, share experiences, and help monitor project progress to ensure openness and accountability. Working together to promote equal participation for women, youth, and marginalized groups will make everyone's contribution meaningful and respected. Active community involvement will strengthen ownership, improve education services, and make projects more sustainable over time.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Policymakers

Policymakers at the national level, particularly in the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology and the President's Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), should improve and support policies that recognize the community's contribution to education development. Adequate funds should be provided for awareness campaigns, training, and gender-inclusive programs at the local level. Clear guidelines should ensure that community representatives contribute in all stages of project design, planning, and monitoring. Linking education initiatives with social and economic empowerment programs will further encourage people to contribute their time, effort, and resources to educational progress.

5.3.4 Recommendations for Further Studies

Further research is needed to deepen understanding of how demographic, social, and economic factors contribute to community participation in education projects. Future studies should include more districts within Rukwa and other regions to allow for comparison and learning. Long-term studies are encouraged to examine how economic changes, population growth, and social conditions contribute to sustained participation. Researchers should use mixed approaches that collect views from teachers, parents, students, and local leaders to identify better ways of enhancing community contribution in education development.

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