



# Challenges of Community Participation in Government-Funded School Projects in the Morogoro Region

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explores the challenges encountered in community participation in government-funded school projects in the Morogoro region. The study used a case study research design to determine the strategies from a total sample of 23 comprising 10 Headmasters, 01 Ward Councilor, 02 Ward Educational Officers, and 10 School Board Chairpersons. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, which were then analyzed using thematic analysis. The study found that ineffective governance, limited community capacity, and financial constraints hinder the sustainability of government-funded school projects in Morogoro. To address these challenges, capacity-building, improved transparency, and financial support mechanisms are recommended to enhance community participation and project management.*

**Keywords:** Community, Government, School and Projects, Sustainability.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Community participation is widely recognized as a crucial element in the development of education. Government-funded school projects heavily rely on local community involvement to ensure their success, accountability, and alignment with the needs of the people they serve (York et al., 2015). Studies have shown that when communities actively engage in school projects, there is better resource management, improved learning outcomes, and increased project sustainability. For example, a study in India by Rout (2013) found that active community participation led to better-maintained school infrastructure and more efficient use of resources. Despite these advantages, community participation in school projects remains a challenge in many countries.

In the African context, cultural and social factors significantly influence community engagement in education development. For instance, a study conducted by UNICEF (2020) in Ghana revealed that cultural norms often limit women's participation in school projects, reducing the diversity of perspectives in decision-making. Similarly, research by Masuku and Jili (2019) in South Africa highlighted how bureaucratic inefficiencies and rigid government policies hinder timely decision-making, discouraging local stakeholders from taking part in school development initiatives.

Additionally, corruption and lack of transparency present major barriers to effective community participation. A study by Singh and Dahiru (2018) in Nigeria found that mismanagement of funds and the exclusion of local stakeholders from decision-making processes eroded trust in public education projects. This situation often leads to inefficiencies, reduced accountability, and poor project outcomes.

In Tanzania, challenges persist in ensuring meaningful community participation in school projects. Research by Lema and Mwila (2022) indicates that parents and local leaders are often sidelined in the planning, implementation, and infrastructure development processes, with key decisions being made by government officials without adequate consultation. Similarly, Kearney (2011) found that parents were rarely informed about how education funds were allocated, leading to frustration and disengagement from school initiatives. As a result, poor resource utilization and a lack of sustainability continue to affect government-funded school projects.

Given these challenges, this study examines the barriers to community participation in government-funded school projects in the Morogoro region, highlighting key factors that hinder effective engagement and proposing strategies to enhance local involvement in education development.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this study was to examine the challenges of community participation in government-funded school projects in the Morogoro Region. Specifically, the study addressed the following specific objectives;

- i. To evaluate the effectiveness of school management committee members' SMC and other governance structure.
- ii. To investigate the level of awareness, knowledge, and capacity of community members.
- iii. To examine the financial challenges that hinder community participation.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Empirical studies highlight various challenges that hinder community participation in government-funded school projects. For instance, Ngonge (2020) established a correlation between community contributions and their willingness to engage in school management. The study found that while communities contributed resources, their interests were not adequately represented through school boards. Several factors, including low education levels, poor coordination, and limited awareness, posed significant barriers to participation. Political antagonism and restrictive government policies further limited community involvement. Consequently, participation was primarily focused on providing resources rather than decision-making in school management.

Similarly, George and Onyango (2024) emphasized the significance of community contributions in addressing staffing shortages and improving learning environments. They acknowledged that communities play a crucial role in supporting schools through financial and material contributions. However, the study cautioned that community efforts alone are insufficient to meet the needs of government-funded schools. Without formal structures and adequate government support, community contributions remain limited in impact. The study recommended institutionalizing community participation and increasing governmental support to enhance sustainability.

Samata (2019) analyzed participation levels in PADEP community projects and found that involvement was particularly low during the project identification and design stages. Despite this, the study revealed that 93.5% of respondents had positive perceptions of PADEP projects due to associated benefits. These benefits included increased household income, improved livelihoods, and greater food security. Additionally, prior experience in project participation and household size were found to be significant determinants of engagement. The findings suggest that while participation levels were initially low, the tangible benefits of the projects helped foster positive attitudes toward community involvement.

Malipula (2024) explored community participation in the construction of community secondary schools. The study found that factors such as knowledge of participation, perceived benefits, financial transparency, and quality leadership positively influenced engagement. Additionally, decentralization of decision-making and community empowerment were critical motivators. Conversely, the absence of these factors discouraged participation and weakened community involvement. The study emphasized the need for policies that enhance awareness, promote transparency, and encourage active community decision-making in development projects.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Research Design**

The study used a case study research design, which looks into cases in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the context of specific cases. A case study research design also examines the particularity and complexity of a case, coming to understand its activities and particular circumstances (Stake, 1995).

## 4.2 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A total of 23 sample size of participants was used, comprised of 10 Headmasters, 01 Ward Councilor, 02 Ward Educational Officers, and 10 School Board Chairpersons. The number was suitable for the study because the study required qualitative information (Silverman, 2013; Creswell, 2012).

Purposive sampling techniques were employed in the selection of respondents. This non-probability sampling method was chosen to ensure that individuals with specific knowledge and experiences related to the educational landscape were included, thereby enhancing the depth and relevance of the data collected (Palinkas et al., 2015). Selecting key stakeholders directly involved in educational governance and administration, the study aimed to gather insights that reflect the complexities and dynamics of community engagement in the educational sector.

## 4.3 Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were employed for data collection from respondents to allow for a flexible yet focused approach. This method enabled the interviewer to ask predetermined questions while also facilitating the exploration of emerging themes and ideas relevant to the study. As noted by Kvale (2007), semi-structured interviews provide a balance between structured and open-ended questioning, allowing for richer, more nuanced responses. This approach is particularly beneficial in educational research, where understanding the participants' perspectives can lead to deeper insights into community involvement and educational outcomes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

## 4.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed through the generation of initial themes based on the codes developed in the previous phase. The researcher looked for shared patterns and meanings across the dataset, compiling clusters of codes that represented core ideas or concepts relevant to the research questions. Themes, which were broader than codes, served as the unit of analysis and helped interpret the data and develop arguments. The themes were derived from the data, the research questions, and the researcher's knowledge. Both inductive and deductive approaches were used, and tables and matrices were employed to aid in organizing the emergent themes for coding. This phase enabled the selection of appropriate themes to draw meaningful conclusions in line with the study's objective.

# 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

## 5.1 The Effectiveness of SMC Members and Other Governance Structures

The first specific objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of SMC members and other governance structures in understanding their roles concerning government-funded school projects in Morogoro. Findings indicate that one of the major challenges to sustaining these projects is the inadequate understanding of roles among many SMC members, as evidenced by the following statement:

*"Sometimes, the committee members themselves don't have enough understanding of what to do, so they cannot guide us properly"* (SBC4, Personal Communication, 4 July 2024).

Additionally, results highlight that the exclusion of SMC members from meaningful participation in decision-making processes due to poor communication and transparency from leadership further weakens their effectiveness. One participant stated:

*"We only hear of the decisions after they have been made; we are not asked to give our views"* (WC1, Personal Communication, 4 July 2024).

Economic hardships among committee members were also reported as a significant barrier, affecting their ability to actively contribute to school projects. A respondent noted:

*"We have our financial struggles, so even though we want to help, sometimes it's too much"* (SBM6, Personal Communication, 11 July 2024).

These findings align with previous research, such as Masue (2010) and Ngowi and Mafwolo (2022), which emphasize that SMC members often lack formal training, limiting their capacity to oversee and implement school projects effectively. Furthermore, Salamandra (2021) highlights that exclusion from key decision-making processes due to

weak communication and transparency negatively impacts stakeholder engagement in school governance. Economic constraints as a limiting factor in community participation are also well-documented in studies such as Kivuva (2023), which found that financial struggles reduce local involvement in school projects.

To address these challenges, there is a need for targeted capacity-building initiatives, improved governance structures that promote inclusive decision-making, and economic support mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of SMC members in managing school projects in Morogoro.

### **5.2 Awareness, Knowledge, and Capacity of Community Members in Bidding for School Project Supplies**

The second specific objective of this study was to assess the level of awareness, knowledge, and capacity of community members in bidding for supplies for government-funded school projects. The findings reveal that many community members face significant challenges in understanding and navigating the tendering process, which affects their ability to participate effectively. These challenges contribute to the limited sustainability of government-funded school projects in Morogoro, as illustrated in the following statement:

*“Most community members don’t even know how to apply for these tenders, so how can we compete?”* (WEO2, Personal Communication, 11 July 2024).

This difficulty stems from a lack of financial literacy, limited knowledge of administrative requirements, and inadequate competitive capacity. Additionally, minimal support from local authorities further weakens the ability of community members to engage in the bidding process successfully.

Economic constraints and fluctuating material prices also pose significant barriers, making it difficult for local suppliers to secure contracts. This challenge is reflected in the following statement:

*“Even when communities are given the chance, they cannot afford the materials because the prices are too high, and we don’t have money.”* (HM1, Personal Communication, 4 July 2024).

These findings align with previous research on barriers to local participation in public procurement. Studies such as Ramphoma (2021) highlight that limited financial literacy and administrative knowledge prevent community members from successfully engaging in tendering, leading to the dominance of well-established firms. Similarly, Hollings (2021) found that a lack of institutional support further marginalizes local bidders, reducing their ability to compete.

Moreover, economic constraints and price fluctuations, as noted by Arnold et al. (2009), significantly impact procurement sustainability, particularly in low-income regions. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions, including capacity-building programs, financial support mechanisms, and improved transparency to enhance community participation in the tendering process for school projects in Morogoro.

### **5.3 Financial Challenges Hindering Community Participation in School Project Supervision**

The third and final specific objective of this study was to assess the level of community engagement in the supervisory role of government-funded school projects in Morogoro. Findings indicate that financial challenges significantly hinder community participation in supervision, as many community members lack the necessary resources, training, and support to effectively oversee project implementation. Limited financial capacity affects their ability to engage meaningfully, leading to gaps in project monitoring and sustainability.

A respondent highlighted this challenge, stating:

*“The community is involved in supervision, security services, and site clearance, which contribute to project sustainability. However, without financial incentives or resources, participation remains inconsistent and limited”* (WEO1, Personal Communication, 4 July 2024).

While community members express willingness to contribute, financial constraints prevent them from accessing training or securing the necessary tools to conduct thorough supervision. As a result, maintaining quality and safety standards becomes a challenge. Moreover, security efforts within school projects suffer due to a lack of financial support, leaving projects vulnerable to resource loss and damage.

Another participant emphasized this concern:

*“We try to guard the schools ourselves, but without proper funding or support, it’s difficult to prevent theft or damage”* (HM5, Personal Communication, 18 July 2024).

The inability to finance local security measures increases the risk of theft and vandalism, ultimately threatening the longevity of school projects. This aligns with existing research, such as Banda (2022), which highlights that financial limitations in community-led supervision reduce oversight effectiveness. Similarly, Chaula et al. (2024) found that without clear funding structures, communities struggle to implement consistent monitoring practices.

Additionally, Nyirenda (2021) notes that inadequate funding for local security exposes public infrastructure to deterioration, further compromising sustainability. These findings underscore the need for improved financial and logistical support, structured training programs, and clearer supervisory frameworks to enhance community participation in government-funded school projects in Morogoro.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study concludes that the effectiveness of SMC members and other governance structures in managing government-funded school projects in Morogoro is hindered by inadequate role awareness, limited participation in decision-making, and financial constraints. Similarly, the lack of knowledge and capacity among community members in bidding for school project supplies limits their involvement, while financial challenges further weaken their ability to supervise and sustain these projects. These barriers collectively contribute to the inefficiency and unsustainability of school projects, highlighting the need for targeted interventions.

To improve governance and community participation, it is recommended that capacity-building programs be introduced to enhance the knowledge and effectiveness of SMC members and local suppliers. Additionally, stronger transparency and communication mechanisms should be established to foster inclusive decision-making in school project management. Financial support mechanisms, such as subsidies or community funding initiatives, should also be explored to ease economic burdens and enable better supervision, procurement participation, and long-term sustainability of school projects in Morogoro.

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