



# Assessment of Women Participation in Rural Development and Their Contribution towards Education of Maasai Girls in Simanjiro District, Tanzania

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**Abstract:** *The study assessed women participation in rural development and its contribution towards the education of Maasai girls in Simanjiro district. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the influence of this participation on education access among Maasai girls and investigated the strategies to improve women participation in community development to enhance education access for Maasai girls. The study was guided by the social capital theory. The study adopted the convergent design and targeted a population of 149,536 individuals including public secondary school students, teachers, ward executive officers and women in Simanjiro district. The sample of the study included 100 participants who were selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The study used questionnaires and interview guides as tools for data collection validated by three experts in the field of women rights advocacy. The tools were pilot tested in two schools involving six students and 4 teachers. The reliability was ensured through split half method where the reliability coefficients (0.93 for teachers' and 0.88 for students' questionnaires) were obtained. The study found out that women involvement in community development positively influenced girls' education by advocating for educational resources and policy changes. It was concluded that increasing women participation in community development could enhance education opportunities for Maasai girls. The study recommended addressing cultural barriers, raising awareness about gender equality, implementing education and training programmes for women and encouraging inclusive dialogue to enhance women awareness of their rights and legal protections.*

**Keywords:** Women, Rural, Development, Maasai, Education, Tanzania

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## 1. Introduction

Education among girls and women is fundamental for societal advancement and individual empowerment. Dökme et al. (2022) emphasize its crucial role in

optimizing resource utilization and cultivating a skilled workforce, thereby increasing societal development. Additionally, according to Kim (2023), educated women demonstrate enhanced abilities in managing family responsibilities, such as family planning, compared to their

uneducated counterparts. This highlights the transformative potential of education for girls and women, not only in shaping their personal development but also in fostering broader social and economic advancement. Providing women with access to education unlocks their full potential, leading to more prosperous and equitable futures for all. This being the case, different countries across the world are at a constant struggle to ensure access to quality education for girls and women.

Some of the strategies for enhancing women participation in education and rural development include implementing realistic educational programmes, investing in infrastructure, eliminating financial barriers, fostering community engagement and advocating for cultural shifts. These efforts aim to ensure equitable access to education among women and girls, empowering them to contribute to societal development. Maruyama et al. (2022) demonstrate through the case of Niger that collaboration among various stakeholders can accelerate girls' enrollment, highlighting the potential for collective impact in educational development. Additionally, Soltani and Palouj (2022) emphasize the importance of culturally sensitive planning and the formation of women groups and networks in rural development, as observed in India. This shows that governments are planning and implementing several strategies to improve the access to education among girls. Despite the efforts to address gender disparities in education, significant gaps persist, leaving girls disadvantaged in terms of access and opportunities. Psaki et al. (2022) highlight ongoing challenges, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where primary enrollment and attainment for girls, gender disparities persist. In India, Ghosh et al. (2022) shed light on the discrimination faced by women and girls in accessing educational opportunities. Similarly, while Bangladesh has made steps in achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education, Ahmed et al. (2023) noted a concerning drop-off at the tertiary level and in the job sector for women. Such disparities have profound consequences for both personal and societal development, as they limit the potential of half of the population. Females miss out on opportunities for personal growth and economic empowerment, while societies suffer from reduced productivity, innovation and social cohesion.

Women participation in development activities varies across different countries, each presenting unique challenges and opportunities. In the Philippines, Gutierrez and Vafadari (2023) highlighted women active involvement in the tourism industry, which not only empowers them economically but also aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In Nigeria, Joshua and Omahas (2023) emphasize the critical role of women in agricultural production despite facing numerous challenges such as limited access to resources and gender bias. In

Zimbabwe, Makandwa et al. (2023) revealed varying degrees of involvement. In Ethiopia, Sisay et al. (2021) noted the significant contributions of women in development activities. These scholars have shown the importance of recognizing and addressing gender-specific challenges to enhance women participation in development activities across different contexts including the education sector. However, it is not clear yet whether their participation in such activities may positively influence educational attainment among female students.

In Tanzania, the participation of women in community development efforts is hindered by various challenges (Jovin and Tarimo, 2023). Venis et al. (2022) highlight obstacles such as traditional gender roles, limited access to resources and cultural norms favoring men in decision-making. Despite these barriers, women in Tanzania are increasingly engaging in community initiatives, including entrepreneurship, financial cooperatives and programmes aimed at empowering girls through education (Madukuli, 2023). However, the impact of women involvement on the education of Maasai girls is complex. While their participation leads to advocacy for girls' education and the establishment of community schools, gender inequalities persist, affecting enrollment, retention and completion rates (Mtey, 2017). Thus, there was a need for more investigations to find out the extent to which the participation of women in community development influences the education attainment of girls.

In Simanjiro district, similar challenges and factors influence women participation in community development efforts, with implications for Maasai girls' education access. Welwel (2022) indicates that despite efforts to promote gender equality, women in Simanjiro still face obstacles such as limited decision-making power, lack of access to education and training opportunities and entrenched cultural beliefs that prioritize boys' education over girls. Moreover, economic constraints and household responsibilities often restrict women ability to actively engage in community development activities. Despite these challenges, women in Simanjiro district actively contribute to community development through various avenues that demonstrate their participation in initiatives such as the onion value chain development activities and village land use planning committees (Jeckoniah, 2017). Their involvement in the onion value chain as evidenced in the study by Jeckoniah et al. (2021), who demonstrates their role in economic empowerment and agricultural development. Given this context, there is a pressing need for further exploration of women participation in community development and its contribution to education access among Maasai girls in Simanjiro district.

## 1.1 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does women participation in rural development influence education of Maasai girls in Simanjiro district?
2. What are the strategies for women participation in rural development for enhancing education of Maasai girls in Simanjiro district?

## 2. Theoretical Review

This study was grounded in the social capital theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu in the late 20th century.

### 2.1 Social Capital Theory

The theory posits that social networks, relationships and institutions are valuable resources that facilitate collective action and individual well-being. According to the theory, individuals accumulate social capital through their connections within communities, enabling access to resources such as information, support and opportunities (Bourdieu, 2001). This theory assumes that social networks possess inherent value, trust and reciprocity are integral components of social capital and social cohesion contributes to societal resilience and development. In the context of the current study on women participation in community development and its impact on education access among Maasai girls in Simanjiro district, Tanzania, social capital theory provided a framework for understanding how women social networks and relationships influence their ability to advocate for girls' education and effect change within their communities.

#### 2.1.1 Strengths of Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory provides a lens through which to analyze the role of women social networks in fostering community development and supporting educational initiatives. By examining the density, diversity and quality of women connections within their communities, the theory helps to elucidate how social capital contributes to their capacity to mobilize resources for girls' education. Furthermore, social capital theory highlights the importance of trust, reciprocity and social cohesion in facilitating collective action. These factors are critical in promoting collaboration and cooperation among women in advocating for educational opportunities for Maasai girls.

### 2.1.2 Application of Social Capital Theory to Current Study

Social capital theory was utilized in the study to analyze the nature and dynamics of women social networks and relationships in Simanjiro district, Tanzania. Through mixed methods, the study explored the resources women mobilize within their social networks to support girls' education, including information, financial assistance and emotional support. Additionally, the theory informed the development of interventions aimed at strengthening women social networks and enhancing their capacity to advocate for educational opportunities within their communities. The theory provided a valuable framework for understanding the relation aspects of community development and education access. Thus, the theory offered insights that could inform policy and practice interventions aimed at promoting gender equity and educational equality among Maasai girls in Simanjiro district.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

The empirical literature was reviewed with reference to research questions.

### 2.2.1 Extent to Which Women Participation in Rural Development Influence Education of Girls

Sun et al. (2023) investigated the impact of women bargaining power on children's educational expenditure in China. Using a sample from the China Family Panel Studies, the researchers applied a Difference-in-Differences approach to analyze the effects of an amendment to the Chinese Marriage Law on intra-household property ownership. The study found that a decline in women bargaining power, resulting from the law amendment, led to a significant reduction in couples' expenses on children's education, particularly when women were deprived of their house property. Saleemi and Kofol (2022) conducted a study in Pakistan to explore the association between women participation in household decisions and the allocation of education expenditures for boys and girls. Using longitudinal data from rural households, the researchers employed a Fixed Effects Model to estimate changes in education expenditure shares due to women decision-making involvement. The findings revealed that households where women participated in decisions allocated higher shares of education expenditures to girls, indicating a positive impact on gender equality in education spending.

Majeed and Kiran (2019) investigated the relationship between women decision-making power and child labor in Pakistan. Using data from the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey, the researchers employed logistic regression to analyze the impact of women decision-making on key family matters. The study found that empowering women through increased decision-making autonomy reduced the probability of child labor, with women participation in decisions regarding family size having the most significant effect. Vundi (2020) investigated the link between the empowerment of rural women and sustainable development in Kenya. Conducted through a descriptive study, data were collected from 100 respondents using questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The study found that despite women heavy presence in the informal sector, their educational status remained low, hindering their empowerment and participation in decision-making processes.

Mugaya (2020) explored challenges facing rural women in accessing natural resources in Dodoma rural areas, Tanzania. The study, guided by three objectives, employed qualitative methods including interviews, observations and focus group discussions to collect data from 30 respondents. Findings revealed that rural women faced financial dependence on men and limited access to natural resources, hindering their participation in education. The study recommends sensitization programmes to address gender inequalities in resource access and control.

### 2.2.2 Strategies on Women Participation on Rural Development for Enhancing Education of Girls

Habib (2019) conducted a cross-sectional, descriptive and empirical study to examine the impact of education and employment on women empowerment in Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan. Survey techniques were used to gather information from educated and employed women in Quetta district. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between education, employment and women empowerment in decision-making, resource control and voice. Education facilitated employment, leading to financial independence and empowerment. Soltani and Palouj (2022) investigated strategies for enhancing rural women participation in development projects in Iran. The study, conducted in 2020-2021, employed an internet survey method to collect data from a sample of 71 individuals. The results identified six main strategies, including planning based on individual characteristics, cultural and social issues, education development, media content and ICT, forming women groups, access to financial resources and promoting government policies. While prioritizing strategies varied across participation stages, forming special groups for women and networking emerged as high priorities.

Reshi and Sudha (2023) conducted a comprehensive literature review on women empowerment in India, delving into its historical evolution, significance in achieving sustainable development goals and effective strategies. The review underscored the pivotal role of education, access to resources and political participation in empowering women. By synthesizing existing knowledge, the study provided valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of women empowerment. Engida (2021) contributed to the discourse on women empowerment in Ethiopia, emphasizing the transformative role of education in enhancing women engagement in societal development. The study elucidated how education fosters self-confidence, decision-making abilities and gender parity, thus empowering women to participate more actively in various spheres of life.

Mutungi (2022) investigated socioeconomic, cultural and educational barriers to women participation in community development projects in Kenya, Mukaa-Kitaingo Ward. The study identified entrenched cultural practices, limited access to equal opportunities, economic challenges and inadequate skills as significant hurdles to women engagement in development projects. In Tanzania, Ngusa (2022) examined the time allocation and income generation activities among rural women in Busega District, aiming to understand how household chores impact women wealth statuses. The study utilized a cross-sectional research design and employed various data collection methods, including household surveys and focus group discussions. Findings revealed that rural women predominantly allocated their time to household chores, limiting their participation in income-generating activities. Consequently, the majority of women were classified as poor due to their low incomes.

## 3. Methodology

The study adopted the convergent design and targeted a population of 149,536 individuals including public secondary school students, teachers, ward executive officers and women in Simanjiro district. The selection of sample size was based on the Yamane (1967), formula of sample size calculation states:  $= \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ . The total target population in public secondary schools in Simanjiro district is 2028 individuals. Since the entire population cannot be a part of the study, this study sampled the population using calculation of sample size based on Yamane Formula which states:  $= n \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ : Where: n=required sample size, N=total population and e= margin error (0.1 or 10%) Therefore:

$$n = \frac{149536}{1 + 149536(0.1)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{149536}{1 + 149536 (0.01)}$$

$$n = \frac{149536}{1 + 1495.36}$$

$$n = \frac{149536}{1496.36}$$

$$n = 99.93 \approx 100$$

For a sample size of 100, this study divided the sample into respondents for quantitative data and respondents for qualitative data as shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Sample Size Frame**

| Respondents     | Sample Size | Sampling Technique                  |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Students        | 50          | Stratified & simple random Sampling |
| Teachers        | 20          | Stratified & Simple random Sampling |
| Women           | 20          | Simple random Sampling              |
| Heads of school | 5           | Criterion Purposive Sampling        |
| WEO             | 5           | Criterion Purposive Sampling        |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>100</b>  |                                     |

Source: Researcher (2024)

The study used questionnaires and interview guides as tools for data collection. These tools were validated through the use of three experts in the field of research. The tools were pilot tested in two schools involving six students and 4 teachers. The reliability was ensured through split half method where the reliability coefficients (0.93 for teachers' and 0.88 for students' questionnaires) were obtained.

Upon receiving the research permit, the researcher administered the data collection tools personally for collecting quantitative data and for interviews, the researcher booked an appointment with the interviewees based on their schedule. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS-Version 25 and Microsoft Excel computer programmes to provide tables and figures with frequencies and percentages. Confidentiality and privacy were adhered as the researcher maintained the confidentiality and privacy of the participants' personal information such as their identity and data that they provided. Moreover, the researcher gave appropriate credit and recognition to all contributors by acknowledging sources of information.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The findings were discussed according to themes derived from research questions.

### 4.1 Influence of Women Participation in Community Development on Education Access among Maasai Girls in Simanjiro District

The study aimed at determining the influence of women participation in community development on education access among Maasai girls in Simanjiro district. Both students and teacher respondents were provided with a Likert scale having ten statements and requested to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement. Their responses were quantified to generate percentages as presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Responses on the Influence of Women Participation in Rural Development on Access to Education among Maasai Girls**

| Statements   | Agree |      | Neutral |      | Disagree |       |
|--|-------|------|---------|------|----------|-------|
|  | SS    | TS   | SS      | TS   | SS       | TS    |
| Women involvement in community development positively impacts Maasai girls' access to education.                             | 70.0  | 75.0 | 2.0     | 0.0  | 28.00    | 25.00 |
| Maasai girls' education is hindered by traditional perceptions of women roles in community development.                      | 68.0  | 85.0 | 4.0     | 0.0  | 28.00    | 15.00 |
| Increased participation of women in community development leads to better educational opportunities for Maasai girls.        | 74.0  | 85.0 | 2.0     | 5.0  | 24.00    | 10.00 |
| Traditional gender norms within the Maasai community limit girls' access to education despite community development efforts. | 60.0  | 90.0 | 14.0    | 10.0 | 26.00    | 0.00  |
| Empowering women in community development initiatives directly improves Maasai girls' access to education.                   | 64.0  | 85.0 | 10.0    | 10.0 | 26.00    | 5.00  |
| Women leadership in community development positively influences Maasai girls' educational attainment.                        | 68.0  | 80.0 | 8.0     | 10.0 | 24.00    | 10.00 |
| Cultural beliefs about women roles in community development negatively affect Maasai girls' access to education.             | 70.0  | 85.0 | 4.0     | 15.0 | 26.00    | 0.00  |
| The exclusion of women from community development initiatives restricts educational opportunities for Maasai girls.          | 66.0  | 90.0 | 6.0     | 0.0  | 28.00    | 10.00 |
| Women active participation in community development leads to greater investment in Maasai girls' education.                  | 68.0  | 85.0 | 2.0     | 0.0  | 30.00    | 15.00 |
| Gender stereotypes perpetuated through community development activities impede Maasai girls' educational progress.           | 72.0  | 90.0 | 0.0     | 10.0 | 28.00    | 0.00  |
| Women involvement in community development positively impacts Maasai girls' access to education.                             | 70.0  | 75.0 | 2.0     | 0.0  | 28.00    | 25.00 |
| Maasai girls' education is hindered by traditional perceptions of women roles in community development.                      | 68.0  | 85.0 | 4.0     | 0.0  | 28.00    | 15.00 |
| Increased participation of women in community development leads to better educational opportunities for Maasai girls.        | 74.0  | 85.0 | 2.0     | 5.0  | 24.00    | 10.00 |

Source: Field data (2024) Key: SS = students' responses; TS = teachers' responses

Concerning the hindrance of Maasai girls' education by traditional perceptions of women roles in community development, a significant majority of teachers (85.00%) and a substantial portion of students (68.00%) agreed. Conversely, 15.00% of teachers and 28.00% of students disagreed, with a minor percentage of students (4.00%) indicating neutrality. This consensus highlights widespread recognition among participants regarding the detrimental impact of traditional gender roles on girls' educational opportunities. These findings are in agreement with Zakayo and Lekula (2022), who underscored prevalent biases favoring the education of boys over girls in rural Maasai communities. The minority of respondents who disagreed or remained neutral suggests a need for continued sensitization efforts to challenge and shift traditional perceptions. Addressing these traditional views is crucial to improving educational access for Maasai girls, ensuring a more equitable approach to community development. The consequences of these perceptions include limiting girls' access to education, perpetuating

gender disparities and hindering community progress towards gender equality in education.

The cultural practices were also identified to be hindrance factors for women participation in development activities and hence affecting their active roles on their development and the development of the society. This was emphasized by one of the ward education officers who had the following to say;

*Cultural practices in the Maasai community, such as early marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and the preference for boys' education significantly hinder women participation in community development. These practices not only marginalize women but also prevent them from taking on active roles in societal progress*(Personal Interview; WEO 4, 11/06/2024)

The response from the education officer highlights the impact of traditional cultural practices such as early marriage, FGM and the preference for boys' education on the participation of Maasai women in community development. This aligns with the quantitative data, which shows majority of teachers and students recognizing these traditional perceptions as hindrances to Maasai girls' education. This implies that traditional gender roles are considered not only to restrict women participation in community development but also limit their ability to contribute meaningfully to community progress. Such constraints perpetuate gender disparities, marginalizing women and obstructing efforts towards achieving gender equality in education and broader societal development.

Focusing on the idea that increased participation of women in community development leads to better educational opportunities for Maasai girls, 85.00% of teachers and 74.00% of students agreed. Meanwhile, 10.00% of teachers and 24.00% of students disagreed and a small minority of teachers (5.00%) and students (2.00%) remained neutral. This strong agreement indicates a common understanding of the positive impact of women involvement in community development on girls' education, aligning with the findings of Saleemi and Kofol (2022), who highlighted the positive impact of women participation on educational spending for girls. The minority who disagreed or were neutral suggests ongoing challenges or resistance to fully integrating women into development roles. These findings imply the need for targeted initiatives to promote women participation, thereby enhancing educational opportunities for girls and fostering long-term community development. The consequence of limited participation includes missed opportunities for mentorship and role modeling for Maasai girls, potentially perpetuating cycles of inequality and underdevelopment in education.

The importance of increasing women participation in community development in relation to the access to education among Maasai girls was also pinpointed during the interviews with key informants. One of the heads of schools had the following to say regarding this aspect:

*Increasing women participation in community development significantly improves access to education among girls. When women are actively involved in development projects, they bring unique perspectives and prioritize educational initiatives for children. For instance, women are more likely to advocate for school facilities, create awareness about the importance of girls' education and push for policies that support educational equality (Personal Interview; HOS 3, 10/06/2024)*

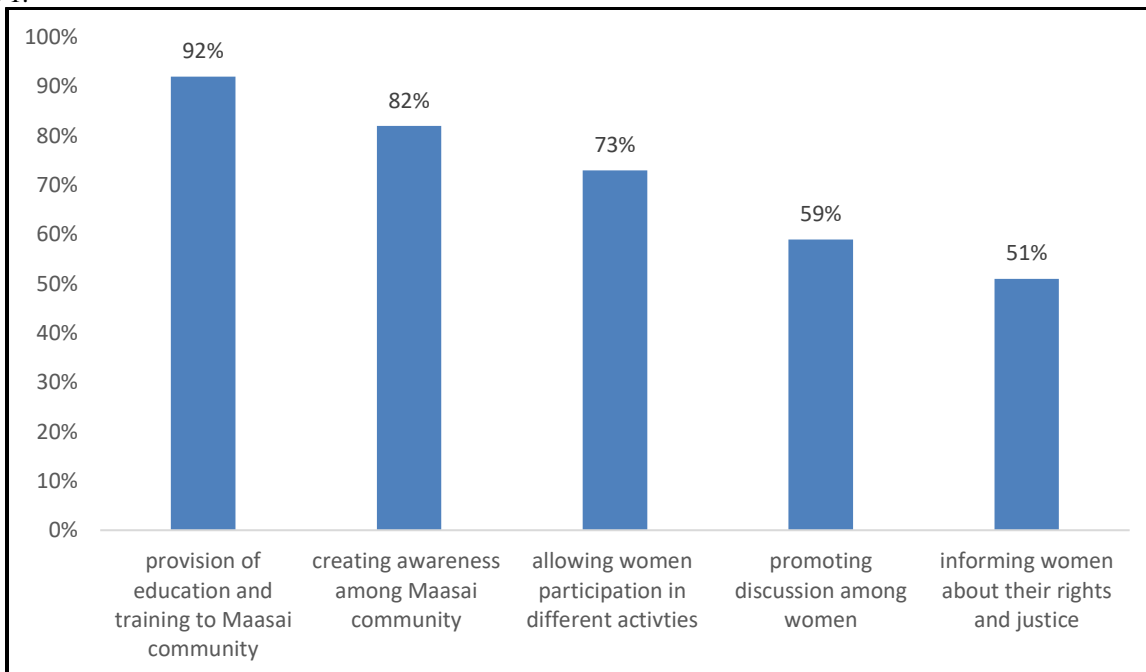
Responses from the head of school imply that increasing women participation in community development is perceived to have positive effects on the access to education for Maasai girls. This perspective aligns with the quantitative data where the majority of teachers and students agreed that women involvement positively impacts educational opportunities. The implication is that women participation in community development is crucial for improving educational outcomes, as it leads to advocacy for better school facilities, awareness about the importance of girls' education and policies supporting educational equality. This increased involvement of women can provide mentorship and role models for Maasai girls hence breaking cycles of inequality and underdevelopment in education.

Regarding the impact of traditional gender norms within the Maasai community on girls' access to education, 90.00% of teachers and 60.00% of students agreed that these norms limit educational opportunities despite community development efforts. In contrast, no teachers and 26.00% of students disagreed, while 10.00% of teachers and 14.00% of students were neutral. The high level of agreement among teachers highlights the significant barrier that traditional gender norms pose. These findings support the observations by Venis et al. (2022), who noted that traditional Maasai norms still hinder women participation in economic activities. The minority of students who disagreed or were neutral highlights a potential variation in the perception of gender norms' impact. These findings imply a need for educational programmes that challenge and change these norms to ensure girls can benefit fully from educational opportunities. The consequence of these norms includes restricted access to education for Maasai girls, limiting their potential and perpetuating gender inequalities within the community.

## **4.2 Strategies for Improving Women Participation in Community Development for Enhancing Education Access among Maasai Girls in Simanjiro District**

The study also investigated the strategies for improving women participation in community development for enhancing education access among Maasai girls in Simanjiro district. Teachers and students were provided with an open-ended question that required them to list the strategies for improvement. Their responses were then quantified to generate percentages. Since it was an open-ended question, there was the possibility for a single strategy to be mentioned by more than one respondent. Also it was possible for one respondent to mention more

than one strategy. Therefore, the total percentage was expected to exceed 100%. These responses are presented in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Responses on the Strategies for Improving Women Participation in Community Development Source; Field data (2024)**

The strategies suggested for enhancing women participation in rural development is provision of education and training of Maasai community supported by 92% of the respondents, and creating awareness among the Maasai community, supported by 82% agreement among teachers and students. This indicates that most participants recognize the critical role of raising awareness about women involvement in development activities to promote gender equality and community empowerment. These findings align with Mwanyika (2020), who highlighted the challenge of insufficient awareness about the importance of girls' education among the Maasai society. Addressing this through targeted awareness campaigns can potentially shift cultural norms and increase support for women participation in decision-making and development activities, thereby enhancing educational opportunities for Maasai girls.

Creating awareness among the community members was also identified by the key informants as being one of the strategies. One of the ward education officers raised issues about the people in the Maasai community not seeing the need of women participation in community development initiatives. The head of school remarked as follows:

*Many people, especially the elders in the Maasai community, do not see the importance of involving women in development activities including*

*education. This has contributed to a low awareness of education, especially for girls from this community. Therefore, there is a need for creating awareness among them (Personal Interview; WEO 4, 12/06/2024).*

The response from the WEO shows the necessity of creating awareness as many community members particularly elders do not fully recognize the significance of women participation in development. The responses from the head of school are in agreement with the views expressed by teachers and students whereby majority suggested this strategy. This suggests that raising awareness can help to shift cultural norms that currently hinder women active roles in decision-making and development initiatives. By creating such awareness, women from the Maasai communities will be valued and allowed to participate in different community development activities and hence they can take active roles on the improvement of education access among their daughters.

Another proposed strategy is the provision of education and training to the Maasai community with 92% agreement among teachers and students. This high level of agreement suggests that education and training are considered fundamental in empowering women and enhancing their participation in community development. These findings



are consistent with efforts emphasized by Raymond (2020), who argued that empowering marginalized Maasai girls and women through education is essential but currently insufficient. By providing comprehensive education and skills training tailored to the needs of Maasai women, communities can equip them with the knowledge and tools necessary to engage more actively in development initiatives, thereby fostering sustainable socio-economic growth and improving educational outcomes for girls in the district.

The issues of educating the Maasai community also received much attention among the key informants as the mentioned it to be one of the best strategies for improving the participation of women in community development and hence improving the access to education among Maasai girls in Simanjiro district. For instance, one of the heads of schools said:

*I believe that educating the Maasai community is essential for improving the participation of women in rural development. Currently, limited education in the community is a major concern, hindering progress and perpetuating traditional barriers. Providing education, particularly about gender awareness, can empower women and change community perceptions* (Personal Interview; HOS 3, 12/06/2024)

The response from the head of school implies that education is believed to be a pivotal tool for improving women participation in rural development within the Maasai community. By highlighting the critical role of education in overcoming traditional barriers, the head of school emphasized its potential to empower women and shift community perceptions particularly regarding gender roles. This argument aligns with the views given by teachers and students whereby most of them mentioned education as a fundamental strategy for enhancing women involvement in community development and thereby improving educational access for Maasai girls in Simanjiro district.

In the same line of response, another head of school added:

*There is a need for educating the Maasai community on the role of women in rural development. Provision of more education is crucial, as education to all members of the community, regardless of gender, will foster a more inclusive environment. Through education, we can change community perceptions and empower women to take on more active roles in their society* (Personal Interview; HOS 1, 13/06/2024)

The response from this head of school also shows the importance of educating the Maasai community about the role of women in rural development. Advocating for increased education across genders, the head emphasizes that education can create a more inclusive environment by altering community perceptions and empowering women to engage more actively in societal affairs. This view aligns with broader goals of fostering gender equality and promoting community development through informed and inclusive educational initiatives.

Concerning the aspect of educating the Maasai community, one of the ward education officers added:

*Educating the Maasai community on this issue remains to be the main solution to the low participation of women in rural development. Education to girls is essential for empowering them with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute meaningfully to rural development* (Personal Interview; WEO 4, 12/06/2024).

Responses from the ward education officer imply that addressing the low participation of women in rural development among the Maasai community primarily hinges on education. Educating the community particularly girls, is seen as essential for equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to actively contribute to rural development initiatives. This perspective shows the transformative potential of education in empowering women and fostering their engagement in community development efforts as well as improving the access to education among Maasai girls.

Allowing women participation in different activities was identified as a strategy supported by 73% of teachers and students. This indicates that enabling women to participate in diverse community activities is perceived as crucial for promoting their empowerment and enhancing community development. These findings are in agreement with Ondicho (2022), who emphasized that sustained involvement of Maasai women in community development leads to their empowerment over time. By actively involving women in decision-making processes, leadership roles and economic activities, communities can leverage their skills and perspectives to address local challenges effectively, including improving access to education for Maasai girls through targeted initiatives and policies that support gender equality.

Promoting discussions among women received support from 59% of teachers and students as a strategy to enhance women participation in rural development. This suggests that fostering dialogue and collaboration among Maasai women can facilitate collective decision-making and advocacy for their rights and interests. These findings are

underscored by Majeed and Kiran (2019), who found that increasing women decision-making autonomy reduces child labor and enhances family well-being. By promoting open discussions and peer support networks, communities can empower women to advocate for educational opportunities and contribute to sustainable development initiatives that benefit the entire community, including improved access to education and better socio-economic outcomes for Maasai girls.

Informing women about their rights and justice was identified as a strategy supported by 51% of teachers and students. This implies that enhancing awareness about legal rights and justice systems can empower Maasai women to assert their rights and advocate for gender equality in community development. These findings are in agreement with studies emphasizing the need to address legal barriers and promote justice for marginalized groups, as highlighted by Saba et al. (2020). Their research highlights the transformative potential of legal literacy in enhancing women participation and influencing policy changes that support gender equity. By providing women with knowledge of their rights and access to justice mechanisms, communities can mitigate barriers to women participation and promote inclusive development that benefits educational opportunities for Maasai girls and overall community well-being.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the current study, the following conclusions were drawn:

The study concluded that women participation in rural development has an influence on girls' education in Maasai communities. The influence of women participation positively affects access to education for Maasai girls. When women are actively involved in community development, it leads to better advocacy for educational resources and policy changes that prioritize girls' education. This involvement helps to create a supportive environment that enhances educational opportunities for Maasai girls, promoting greater gender equality in education and improving their overall educational attainment.

The study also concluded that women participation in community development can be enhanced by creating awareness about women participation in rural development, providing education and training to empower Maasai women and encouraging them to take leadership roles in community development. By enhancing women participation in community development, there is a great

possibility of improving the access and attainment of education among the Maasai girls.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

1. Community leaders should address cultural barriers that hinder women participation in community development by engaging local influencers and traditional leaders.
2. Government should raise awareness about the importance of gender equality in decision-making and development activities within the community.
3. The government should implement education and training programmes to empower Maasai women by addressing their specific needs and challenges effectively.
4. Government should encourage inclusive dialogue to enhance women awareness of their rights and legal protections.

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