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Gender Inequality and Collective Action in School Committees: Evidence from Tanzania

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Abstract

The making of education governance reforms has led to the transfer of school management powers to teachers' and parents' representatives through primary school management committees. However, the committees have been found to be inadequate in ensuring that collective action is taken by their male and female members in most low- and middle-income countries. In response, this paper examines the possibilities that collective action by school committees is related to gender inequality, controlling for demographic and socio-economic factors across the rural (Iringa District) and urban (Arusha City) contexts of Tanzania. The results of a simple linear regression analysis using Ordinary Least Square techniques show that gender inequality predicts the collective action in school committees in both Arusha City and Iringa District. However, the multiple linear regression model predicts gender inequality in Arusha, and not in Iringa, controlling for membership experience and occupational status for both the rural and urban samples. This paper has implications for both policy and practice. In particular, the next round of school autonomy reforms needs to consider the criteria for school committee membership to incorporate membership experience and occupational status into the qualifications of parents' representatives. In practice, head teachers need to devise

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innovative, sustainable approaches using the readily available resources to provide planning, budgeting and monitoring skills-based training to newly elected parent representatives.

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Introduction

Since the start of governance reforms in the 1990s, the African continent has witnessed considerable proliferation of participatory public service management teams, a process by which committees have become increasingly important to organising collective action in overseeing public service delivery (Archambault & Ehrhardt, 2022). In Tanzania, the trend includes the rolling out of a school-based management (SBM) programme to transfer school management powers from the government to schools (United Republic of Tanzania, 2001). This includes gender representation in school committees (SCs) to ensure that there is women's participation in school management (United Republic of Tanzania, 2001, 2018). However, gender mainstreaming has not been carried out systematically to ensure that women participate in collective action in school committees (ActionAid Tanzania, 2011).

Previous research conducted in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) reports that, despite various attempts to promote collective action in school

committees through formal rules (Prinsen & Titega, 2008), gender inequality seems to permeate school management committees (SMCs). For example, in Nigeria, one common struggle facing women members of school-based management committees (SBMCs) is the battle against the frequent insults, ridicules and jeering they receive while conducting committee activities (Coinco, 2012). In South Africa, women's participation in school governing bodies (SGBs) was mainly in non-leadership roles: Having a male figure as a leader was a meaningful social norm and identity (Brown & Duku, 2008). In particular, unmarried female members seemed to be particularly isolated and ostracised (Duku & Salami, 2017).

There appear to be differences in the motivation and participation in school-related collective action between men and women in rural and urban areas (Carr-Hill, 2017). One explanation for this state of affairs is that, in more disadvantaged contexts such as rural areas, schools have had a particularly difficult time to respond to school autonomy reforms (Holme & Rangel, 2012). This paper examines the relationship between gender inequality andcollective action in school committees in rural and urban contexts of Tanzania, controlling for demographic and socio-economic factors. Specifically, two questions are posed: Is there any difference in collective action in school committees between rural and urban Tanzania? Does gender inequality influence the collective action in school committees in rural and urban Tanzania?

Answering these research questions is important because collective action problems facing school committees could also arise because of gender inequality (Cossyleon & Woolley, 2020) emanating from respect for informal rules (Prinsen & Titega, 2008), some of which discriminate against women (Pandolfelli et al., 2007). Hence, it is possible that women members of school committees in Tanzania are

culturally marginalised, since most local communities are shaped by patriarchal values (Nemes, 2013). For example, a recent study observes that participation in monitoring school projects was limited and constrained by the gender imbalance characterising school committees (Masanyiwa et al., 2023). In such a context, neoliberal SBM reforms may both empower and disempower the women involved in school management (Barreto & Doyle, 2023; Dhakal, 2021), depending on the specific social context. Therefore, it is necessary in the Tanzanian context to identify the patterns of relationship between gender inequality and collective action in school committees.

The Policy Context

The current SBM model in Tanzania originates from the Education and Training Policy (ETP), 1995, and the Education (Amendment) Act, 1995. While the former calls for the establishment of enhanced partnerships in the provision of education as well as the streamlining of education management structures through the devolution of authority to districts and schools (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995a), the latter requires each primary school to have a school committee (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995b). Following these school autonomy reforms, the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) was launched in 1997 to initiate the making of several major changes to the management of primary school education, including the decentralisation of the educational administrative structures and the devolution of authority to the local level.

The rolling out of the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) in 2000 coincided with the promulgation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) 2001–2003, which recognised primary school education as one of the priority and pro-poor sectors. In response, the government revised the ESDP and formulated the first Primary

Education Development Plan (PEDP) 2002–2006 to accommodate the LGRP and PRSP mechanisms in the provision of primary school education. In the same year the government formulated the Women and Gender Development Policy (WGDP) to facilitate, inter alia, women's participation in decision-making processes through affirmative action in line with the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1977, which prohibits discrimination based on gender (United Republic of Tanzania, 2000).

The PEDP's institutional arrangements (United Republic of Tanzania, 2001) and the recent school autonomy reforms (United Republic of Tanzania, 2018) show that the main roles and responsibilities of school committees in Tanzania are (i) overseeing teaching and learning in schools by ensuring that teachers perform their duties in an efficient manner, (ii) preparing/approving school plans and budgets, (iii) approving school expenditure and ensuring prudent management of recurrent and development expenditure, (iv) organising and conducting parents' meetings (where school development reports are tabled), and (v) ensuring that all students attend classes as required by the law. The assignment of these functions to school sites necessitates teacher and parent representatives to join hands to provide public goods while at the same time ensuring gender composition.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a theoretical foundation for the paper. Section 3 describes the methods used. Section 4 presents the results and discussion of the findings. Section 5 concludes the paper.

Theoretical Foundation

Central to the influence of gender on collective action is the composition of a group (Kekana & Makura, 2020; Pandolfelli et al.,

2007; Peshkovskaya et al., 2019). The main argument is that the female members of school committees tend to hesitate to participate in deliberations when their number at a meeting is surpassed by the number of their male counterparts by far (Dhakal, 2021). Such critical mass effects (Oliver et al., 1985) suggest that a sufficient number of women on SCs will automatically result in substantive representation of women and in deepening their engagement in decision-making process. However, this argument depends on such women being both motivated and having the capacity to do so in institutional contexts (Unterhalter et al., 2018). In this view, school committee members are highly likely to collaborate with members who are related to them, as predicted by relational demography theories, particularly social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorisation theory (SCT) (Turner et al., 1987).

Social identity theory explains scenarios of in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination, i.e. a self-concept based on membership of social groups (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, such postulation predicts collective action-related problems rather than collaboration in intra-group situation such as school committees. With the development of social categorisation theory, there has been an increasing focus on intra-group structural differentiation, especially the way people vary in their actual or perceived match to a group's norms (Hogg et al., 2017). Since SCT has defined a social identity along the stereotypes inherent in in-group and out-group categorisation (Turner et al., 1987), the theory may still fail to explain how these subordinate and ordinate groups engage in joint collective action-taking (Hasan-Aslih et al., 2020).

In addition, a number of variants of SIT attempt to explain the possibility of collective action involving female in-group and male out-

group members, particularly the social identity model of collective action (SIMCA; van Zomeren et al., 2008) and its extension (van Zomeren et al., 2018), as well as the gender identity model (GIM; Becker & Wagner, 2009). However, the theoretical base of all these SIT modifications is still social identity salience. While social identification can facilitate collective action in the in-group, Hasan-Aslih et al. (2020) show that it plays a complicated role in predicting collective action in intra-groups such as school committees, especially when the female members are in direct conflict with the male ones. After all, identification with a female in-group is limited to supporting women's issues, which indicates that the identity claim of SIMCA and GIM is not relevant for predicting collective action (Mikołajczak et al., 2022) in school committees.

Given the inherent shortcomings of social identity assumptions in relation to CASC, the social identity model of system attitudes (SIMSA; Owuamalam et al., 2018) agree that system justification exists, albeit in the case of high-status groups (Rubin et al., 2023). SIMSA is an umbrella model that unites an unfolding series of social identity-inspired explanations for system-supporting attitudes, including the occurrence of system justification (Owuamalam et al., 2019) on the basis of social reality constraint, i.e. the reality of gender inequality in a particular society makes it difficult for women to challenge it (Owuamalam et al., 2023). In other words, system justification theory (SJT) (Jost & Banaji, 1994) and its modifications (Jost et al., 2004) are influenced by social identity models, since all of them recognise that people are motivated to support their egoistic and group interests (Caricati & Owuamalam, 2020).

Originally, SJT was developed to support and strengthen SIT, but it was later turned into an alternative theory (Akdoğan & Alparslan,

2020). Since SJT distinguishes between three justification motives (ego, group and system) more clearly than any other theory, it has taken the lead over its predecessors in identifying the social and psychological consequences of supporting the status quo (Jost et al., 2004). This is especially the case when women have a weak moral conviction against gender inequality (Cocco et al., 2023; De Cristofaro et al., 2021). For example, in India, Jain and Nandwani (2022) show that increased female representation is associated with improvement in school quality despite incidences of gender discrimination in school management committees. Specifically, both male and female members collaborate in improving the quality of school infrastructure (Guha, 2023).

Similarly, three case studies conducted in South Africa show that young female members of SGBs are prohibited from contributing their ideas during meeting debates but they manage to submit their views through male members (i.e., identifying with outgroup) who had power to act on their behalf (Duku & Salami, 2017). In this sense, changing the status quo requires female members' strong moral conviction against the prevailing gender-insensitive leadership (Cocco et al., 2023). However, such a move will ultimately undermine the existing system justification motives (De Cristofaro et al., 2021) and hence discourage the joint collective action (Hasan-Aslih et al., 2020), unless the moral conviction of in-group members is weak (Cocco et al., 2023; De Cristofaro et al., 2021).

Although gender inequality has attracted sufficient scholarly attention in the last four decades (Dick, 2024), the attention is focused more on the workplace imbalances than on collective action forums with in-group female and out-group male members such as those of school committees. Despite being scant, the existing literature (Berhanu, 2023;

Coinco, 2012; Dhakal, 2019, 2021; Duku & Salami, 2017; Guha, 2023; Jain & Nandwani, 2022) focuses on the roles of in-group female members of school management committees rather than on their collective engagement with their out-group male counterparts. This paper extends this literature by showing how gender inequality influences collective action in school committees, especially when system-justifying beliefs of female members are higher in the rural and urban settings of school governance in a developing country.

Methods

Data

This paper draws on data from a school governance cross-sectional research project undertaken in Arusha City and Iringa District under the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Dar es Salaam (Author, 2015, 2022). Ethical approval was granted by the Postgraduate Committee, University of Dar es Salaam. Similarly, research clearance was provided by the Directorate of Research and Publication, University of Dar es Salaam.

Area of the Study

Comparisons of multiple cases are needed in collective-action studies in order to assess equally plausible causal arguments, examine the relative importance of explanatory variables and determine the generality of causal patterns (Poteete & Ostrom, 2008). Hence, the study was conducted in Arusha City and Iringa District because there are notable differences in the collective action taken in rural and urban settings (Beard & Dasgupta, 2006). On the one hand, Arusha is a multicultural city with a majority of the residents coming from different ethnic groups and with a diversity of social norms (more

heterogeneous). On the other hand, the majority of villages in Iringa (Rural) District still maintain their cultural identities (less heterogeneous), particularly gender norms.

In addition, the selection of Arusha City and Iringa District had to do with the experience in decentralised education management as both areas were part of the first phase of the LGRP. In particular, the two subnational units have been implementing school autonomy reforms since the promulgation of the first PEDP in 2002. While sharing similar characteristics in terms of school autonomy reforms, the two areas represent two different contexts in terms of gender norms. Therefore, they provide compelling cases for studying and comparing the extent of collective action in school committees (CASC) in relation to GI.

Sampling Procedure

School committees were treated as a unit of analysis. There were 145 public primary schools under Iringa District Council and 48 public primary schools in Arusha City. This means that the target population comprised all 145 school committees in Iringa and all 48 school committees in Arusha. The SBM policy (PEDP) requires school committees to have eight official members, namely five parent representatives, including a chairperson, and three teachers' representatives, including head teachers as secretaries. From each school committee, the survey covered four parent representatives, excluding the chairpersons, and two teacher representatives, excluding the head teachers. Thus, six members filled in the questionnaire (four parents' representatives and two teachers' representatives) from each committee; hence there were 156 respondents in each site.

Output Variable

Since it is inherently difficult to measure collective action directly because it is a dynamic process that relates to social relationships, proxy indicators are generally used in operationalising the concept (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2004). Using various definitions of collective action (Gilbert, 2007; Wade, 1987) and SMC (Bruns et al., 2011; Prinsen & Titega, 2008) as well as ain roles and responsibilities (United Republic of Tanzania, 2018), collective action in school committee is operationally defined as the collaboration between and among parent representatives and teacher representatives in assuming their mandated roles and responsibilities in supervising school operations, school planning and budgeting, school financial management, information sharing, and school enrolment and attendance (Author, 2022).

On the basis of the operational definition above, five proxies of CASC were developed as sub-scales: (i) collaboration in the supervision of school operations (CSO), (ii) collaboration in school planning/budgeting (CSP), (iii) collaboration in school financial management (CSF), (iv) collaboration in information sharing (CIS) and (v) collaboration in ensuring school enrolment and attendance (CSA). Each sub-scale yielded two items; thus, there was a combined total of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert-scale: 1 = not at all, 2 = very few times, 3 = sometimes, 4 = most of the time, and 5 = all the time. The resulting CASC scale in Table 1 comprises 10 items that measure an underlying construct of collective action in school committees yielding parametric data (Author, 2015, 2022) after meeting the standard psychometric rule-of-thumb criterion of comprising at least eight reasonably related items (Norman, 2010; Robitzsch, 2020; Sullivan & Artino, 2013).

Table 1.

Items of the CASC Scale

Proxies	Items
Collaboration on Supervision of School Operations	How often have you visited the school to monitor teaching in the last two years?
	How often have you attended meetings per year since you joined the committee?
Collaboration on School Planning and Budgeting	How often have you spoken at the school planning/budgeting sessions?
	How often have you understood plans/budgets in your committee meetings?
Collaboration on School Financial Management	How often have you participated in approving school procurements?
	How often have you participated in approving school financial reports?
Collaboration on School Information Sharing	How often have you reached consensus on information dissemination format?
	How often have you reached consensus on the contents of information disseminated to public?
Collaboration on School Enrolments/Attendance	How often have you combined efforts to increase pupil enrolment?
	How often have you taken joint measures to combat truancy in your school?

Validity and Reliability of the CASC Scale

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to assess the internal structure of the CASC scale to ensure that the items load on the factors

and that the scale reflected a common construct, i.e. unidimensionality (Sijtsma, 2009). Both the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.818) and the Bartlett test of sphericity (558.037, df. = 45, p = 0.000) were significant. The first two factors were identified using the eigenvalue-greater-than-one rule. The validity test indicates that the eigenvalue of the first factor is larger than the eigenvalue of the next factor (3.2 versus 1.2). It also shows that the first and second factors account for 46% of the total variance. A cumulative percentage of variance of 46% is higher than the 40.6% obtained by Williams et al. (2010) in a total of 7 factors having an eigenvalue greater than one. This suggests that the items of the CASC scale are unidimensional.

The reliability test indicates that Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the 10 items is $\alpha = .75$; and hence the CASC scale is acceptable. Its reliability ranges from .72 to .77, which suggests greater internal consistency of the items in the scale. Therefore, it could be argued that the items used in the CASC scale are reliable.

Input Variable

The paper adopts the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to measure the extent of gender inequality (Branisa et al., 2009). The 2012 SIGI is made up of 14 unique variables, which are divided into five sub-indices: discriminatory family code, restricted physical integrity, son bias, restricted resources and entitlements and restricted civil liberties (Cerise & Francavilla, 2012). The most relevant sub-indices for measuring gender inequality adopted in this paper are restricted civil liberties (RCL) and discriminatory family code (DFC).

Table 2.

SIGI for Measuring Gender Inequality

SIGI sub-index	Variables	Items
Discriminatory Family Code	Parental Authority	To what extent do women have the same right to be a legal guardian of a schooling child during marriage?
		To what extent do women have custody rights over her schoolchild after divorce?
	Inheritance Rights	Do widows inherit properties of their deceased husbands in your community?
		Do relatives marry widows following a death of a husband in your community?
Restricted Civil Liberties	Access to Public Space	To what extent do legal restrictions and discriminatory practices hinder women participation in community activities?
		To what extent do women participate in community activities compared to men?
	Voice	Do the voices of women members of school committee get heard equally?
		Do women in the school committee influence decision-making processes?

The measure of gender inequality above is consistent with the SIGI Country Report for Tanzania, which observed the highest level of DFC, currently known as discrimination in the family (DF) and RCL dimensions (OECD, 2022). In the SIGI sample, two out of five people live in households where the male head is the sole decision maker regarding expenditure on basic needs (i.e. food and clothes) as well as large purchases such as buying or renting a house, agricultural land or vehicles. At the same time, more than 90% of the surveyed population shares the opinion that a woman should ask her husband's or partner's

permission if she wants to go to certain public places, including community meetings (OECD, 2022).

Control Variables

In addition to GI, the paper controls for age, educational attainment, occupational status, membership experience and school distance. The sex variable was excluded from the model due to potential multicollinearity. Here, correlation-based principal component analysis (PCA) was employed to find out whether the input variables were independent of each other. The two rules of thumb used in this paper to obtain the main principal components (PCs) are eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (also known as Kaiser rule) and components loadings greater than 0.5. Table 3 shows that there are no outliers among input variables because there is no mean variable that is less than the corresponding standard deviation, indicating that there is no need to perform any standardisation measures prior to PCA computation.

Table 3.

Summary Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Gender Inequality	311	3.3152	0.8613	1.5	10.25
Age	311	43.2154	8.7732	25	68
Education Attainment	312	3.0929	1.2375	1	5
School Distance	312	3.8846	1.2499	0	5
Membership Experience	311	2.8650	1.5116	1	5
Occupation Status	311	2.4598	1.4846	1	5

To ensure that all data have equal weight, the paper performs the analysis using the Correlation Matrix. The matrix shows that the eigenvalue rule retains PC1, PC2 and PC3, which altogether explain about 61.5% of the variation in the data. The PC1 accounted for more

than a fifth (22%) of all the variance. No eigenvalue which is negative, implying that the model is well-conditioned. Therefore, the combination of components 1, 2 and 3 explained more than 60% of the total variation and hence all six input variables were retained.

Model Selection

The paper uses a one-model approach to identify the relative importance of GI in CASC and employs Ordinary Least Square (OLS) techniques to determine how much of the difference between SLR and MLR can be attributed to the control variables (Wojtkiewicz, 2017). The variables in SLR were denoted as follows: X1 = gender inequality and Y = collective action in school committee. The simple linear regression equation takes the following form:

$$y=\beta_{(0)}+\beta_1 x+\in \quad (1)$$

where, b0 is the Y intercept and b1 is the estimated regression coefficient that quantifies the association between SA and the CASC. To control for demographic and socio-economic factors, the potential covariates X2 through Xp were added.. The MLR equation takes the following form:

$$y_i=\beta_{(0)}+\beta_1 x_{i1}+\beta_2 x_{i2}+\cdots+\beta_p x_{ip}+\in \quad (2)$$

where, Yi = CASC, Xi1 = GI, Xi2 = Age, Xi3 = educational attainment, Xi4 = occupational status, Xi5 = membership experience and Xi6 = school distance; B0 = y-intercept at time zero, B1 = regression coefficients that measure a unit change in the dependent variable when Xi1 changes (i.e. change in CASC when GI changes); and B2 = the coefficient value that measures a unit change in the dependent variable when Xi2 changes (i.e. change in CASC when GI changes).

Results

Respondents' Characteristics

This section first summarises the ratings from the CASC scale by presenting the percentage distribution of respondent characteristics for both Arusha City and Iringa District. In Arusha, 79 respondents (51%) were male and 77 respondents (49%) female. In Iringa, 89 respondents (57%) were male and 67 respondents (43%) female. While the gender representation in Arusha is almost balanced, the male members of the sampled school committees in Iringa have a simple majority.

The results suggest that the PEDP's institutional arrangements requirement of ensuring that women are represented on school committees is being fulfilled in both urban and rural Tanzania. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily lead to collaboration between men and women members in the provision of public goods. For example, the existing evidence shows that male members tend to dominate debates and deliberations when gender identity is salient.

Descriptive Results

Descriptive analysis was performed to describe the data from the survey. The findings show that the mean CSP (collaboration in school planning/budgeting) score in Arusha City (M=4.59, SD=0.66) is the highest and the mean CSO (collaboration in school operations) score (M=4.21, SD=0.92) is the lowest. Similarly, the mean CSP score in Iringa District (M=4.43, SD=0.83) is the highest and the CSA (collaboration in school attendance) score (M=3.28, SD=0.93) is the lowest. Therefore, the individual mean scores indicate variations among the measures of collective action in school committees in both sites.

The standard deviation results indicate less variability in the mean CSP than in any one of the other dimensions of CASC and hence confirm the high mean collaboration in school planning and budgeting in the two sites. This should be expected because one of the key responsibilities of school committee is developing a Whole School Development Plan (WSDP) to provide estimates of teaching and learning requirements as well as infrastructural improvements as part of the bottom-up planning process of educational decentralisation in Tanzania. Therefore, participatory planning and budgeting seems to preoccupy school committees in the country.

Table 4 shows that collective action in school committees is higher in Arusha City (M=4.4) than in Iringa District (M=4.1). The t-tests $t(310) = 4.5$, $SEM = 0.00$, $p < 0.001$ confirm the observed difference in the mean CASC between Arusha and Iringa. Since the school committee is the unit of analysis, the observed collective action is for all 156 members, who participated in the survey in Arusha City and for all 156 members in Iringa District.

Table 4.

Differences in CASC between Arusha City and Iringa District

Group	Obs	Mean	T-test	Sig. (2-tailed)
Arusha City	156	4.4082		
Iringa District	156	4.1133		
Combined	312	4.2607	4.5115	.000

The high mean CASC in Arusha City indicates that the SC members in the urban context collaborate more in skill-based tasks than their counterparts in the rural context do. As the respondents' characteristics indicate, the number of SC members in Arusha with

post-secondary school education exceed that of Iringa District by around 16%. In other words, the skills needed for collaboratively providing public goods by school committees are more likely to be obtained from the post-secondary school level of education

Regression Results

OLS techniques were used to estimate the coefficients of input variables in the basic model. The results from the SLR given in Table 5 show that GI predicts CASC in both Arusha City (0.177, $p<0.01$) and Iringa District (0.169, $p<0.05$). The number obtained by the R^2 coefficient is 0.059 (Arusha) and 0.034 (Iringa), meaning that GI explains the total variance in the CASC scale at 5.9% and 3.4%, respectively.

Table 5.

Simple Regression Analysis for GI and CASC

	Arusha	**Iringa**
Variables	**CASC**	**CASC**
Gender Inequality	0.177***	0.169**
	(0.0564)	(0.0733)
Constant	3.736***	3.645***
	(0.218)	(0.211)
Observations	156	155
R-squared	0.059	0.034

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The significant relationship between GI and CASC observed in Arusha is maintained in the MLR results (0.117, $p<0.05$) presented in Table 6 below. Membership experience (0.226, $p<0.01$) and occupational status (0.0593, $p<0.05$) also predict CASC in Arusha. The significant predictors in Iringa are educational attainment (0.0593, $p<0.05$),

membership experience (0.226, p<0.01) and occupational status (0.0593, p<0.05).

Table 6.

Multiple Regression Analysis for Model Inputs and CASC

Variables	Arusha CASC	Iringa CASC
Gender Inequality	0.117**	0.111
	(0.0542)	(0.0723)
Age	0.0479	-0.0163
	(0.0471)	(0.0487)
Education Experience	-0.0036	0.103**
	(0.0339)	(0.0458)
School Distance	-0.0272	0.0499
	(0.0323)	(0.0384)
Members Experience	0.325***	0.231***
	(0.0700)	(0.0747)
Occupation Status	-0.0698***	-0.117*
	(0.0245)	(0.0658)
Constant	2.844***	2.593***
	(0.352)	(0.472)
Observations	156	155
R-squared	0.220	0.167

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The percentage changes of the GI coefficient from the SLR is 73% in Arusha City and 79.8% in Iringa District, meaning that membership experience and occupational status are the control variables in both sites, while educational attainment is important in Iringa. While the

relative importance of GI in Arusha City may not necessarily depend on members' experience and occupational status, the same could not be said about Iringa District, where the effect of GI seems to be contingent upon not only members' membership experience and occupational status, but also on the members' level of education. Since the majority of SC members in the urban sample are formally employed (65%) compared with the rural sample (35%), it could be argued that school committees in Arusha City are more likely to be composed of professionals (such as economists, accountants and lawyers) who can use their technical skills to facilitate collaborations in skill-based tasks such as school planning and budgeting.

The results from the R^2 coefficient (0.220) for Arusha indicate that the basic model explains a proportion of the variability in CASC. In other words, GI, membership experience and occupational status may explain the total variance in the CASC scale at 22%. The results from the R^2 coefficient (0.167) for Iringa suggests that a insignificant prediction of GI is likely to be influenced by the presence of educational attainment, membership experience and occupational status in the model, which puts the total variance in the CASC scale at 17%.

The effect size of model input in both Arusha City and Iringa District is small but significant, meaning that the patterns of the observed relationships between GI and CASC can be theoretically important. This suggests differential effects of gender inequality on CASC between the two sites. Simply put, the school committees in rural settings such as Iringa District are likely to struggle in organising collective action compared to their urban counterparts. In other words, gender identity is more likely to be pronounced in the rural settings more than in the urban settings of school committees.

Discussion

Collective action in school committees was measured using the CASC scale, a 10-item operational measure based on five dimensions (i) CSO, (ii) CSP, (iii) CSF, (iv) CIS and (v) CSA. The t-test confirmation suggests that urban school committees have a comparative advantage for collective action. Such rural-urban patterns of collective action in school committees indicates that remote, underserved public schools lag behind in terms of carrying out school autonomy reforms.

Looking at the respondents' characteristics, one notices that the gender composition of school committees is almost balanced in Arusha City and that the level of women representation is not very far from that of the male members in Iringa District. Contrary to the critical mass postulation (Oliver et al., 1985), this paper suggests that the increase in the number of women may not necessarily matter as far as collective action in school committees is concerned. Although the Indian case (Guha, 2023; Jain & Nandwani, 2022) supports the critical mass postulation, the same could not be said with respect to South Africa, where more women served as SGB members but their gender identity was clearly a limiting factor for them in the school governance process (Brown & Duku, 2008). A similar trend was observed in Zambia (Okitsu & Edwards, 2017) and Nepal (Dhakal, 2019; Sijapati, 2019). In that case, acting together with out-group (male) members is likely to shift attention away from the identity of in-group (female) members, and hence generate a superordinate identity that includes both female in-group and male out-group members (Hasan-Aslih et al., 2020), regardless of the extent of gender composition (Unterhalter et al., 2018).

The key assumption of this paper is that GI is likely to predict CASC for both rural and urban contexts, thus controlling for demographic and socio-economic factors. Results of the regression analyses confirm this assumption, suggesting that members can be more willing to cooperate in groups where both women and men are engaged in decision-making process (Peshkovskaya et al., 2019) due to their system justification (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004; Jost, 2019). For example, the nine case studies of women participation in Nepal show that collective action in SMCs is taken through the participation of local men and women as parents although women members are discriminated against during extracurricular activities (Sijapati, 2019).

After all, female SMC members are not homogeneous, but rather they are composed of professionals such as female teacher representatives, formally employed mothers as well as working-class women such as self-employed mothers, single mothers and housewives (e.g., see Dick, 2024). One inference that can be drawn here is that women members who can be personally affected by low school attendance, dropouts or poor grades of their children are likely to prioritise working together with the rest of SC members, regardless of their gender status. This lends support for the hypothesis that, when the moral conviction against gender inequality (in an inter-group such as a school committee) is weak, the condition of a high system justification demotivates women's in-group identification and, ultimately, their collective action intentions with a male out-group (De Cristofaro et al., 2021). This has implications for school autonomy reforms because ensuring gender composition in school committees may not necessarily matter in collective action in all contexts.

Given the need for technical skills on school committees, both female and male members can be considered as a cadre of volunteer experts

in school management, as long as they justify the prevailing social system (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004). However, this social reality is not currently well captured by school autonomy policy designs in Tanzania. In other words, the spread of neoliberal SBM reforms in school governance has influenced gender equality, but, for women, this shift has not been supported by adequate policy and structural support, particularly inadequate gender mainstreaming or lack thereof (Barreto & Doyle, 2023). While SCs aim for inclusive and deliberative decision-making, their deep functions can be quite different, if social contexts are not considered, a phenomenon which Archambault and Ehrhardt (2022) call a façade for accessing gendered recognition or a club for male members to pursue their shared interests.

Following SJT, it can be said that the influence of GI on CASC seems to depend on the extent of the moral conviction of in-group female members on the basis of the gender composition that considers membership experience and occupational status. Therefore, future school autonomy reforms need to consider these two aspects in the SC membership criteria. In practice, capacity-building training needs to be provided for SC members, as required by the ESDP. This should include raising male members' awareness of the role of women in school governance and of their privileged position in school committees (e.g., see Mazzuca et al., 2022), regardless of the system justification beliefs of their female counterparts.

Conclusion

This paper has shown different patterns of the relationship between GI and CASC between the rural and urban settings of school committees. Overall, it demonstrates that the prediction of GI on CASC is dependent upon the social context of SC members, particularly the moral convictions of female members. This reveals the multifaceted ways in which parent representatives in school committees are collaboratively engaged in the provision of public goods, regardless of the existence of gender inequality.

SBM reforms seem to have successfully altered the composition of school committee membership in both the urban and rural settings. However, membership experience and occupational status appear to be missing from the criteria for membership. Their presence may facilitate the election of experienced female in-group members with a high occupational status who can potentially engage in collective action, regardless of whether gender identity is salient or not.

Generally, the study demonstrates that both rural and urban school committees do not operate in a vacuum. Their social contexts are complex, meaning that collaboration on school committees is not automatic. In this regard, gender inequality can potentially deter the provision of public goods within school committees if the social context of their members is not given due consideration. The following are recommendations for policymakers and education administrators:

The next round of school autonomy reforms should consider the criteria for SC membership to ensure that experience in civic

engagement and an appropriate occupational status are included on the list of the qualifications of parent representatives.

Primary school head teachers need to develop innovative, sustainable approaches using readily available resources (i.e., human, physical) to conduct planning, budgeting and monitoring skills-based capacity building training for newly elected parent representatives.

In addition, district education authorities should revisit the school committee training manual so that it includes social and behavioural change communication (SBCC) topics so that there is sensitivity to gender among both male and female members.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this paper is that it has analysed cross-sectional data. Therefore, the paper has not provided evidence of temporal relationships because the data on the model input and CASC were collected and assessed simultaneously. However, the paper provides evidence of the causal relationship between GI and CASC, controlling for socio-demographic and socio-economic factors using linear regression models.

Future Research

Although the present study has successfully linked GI to CASC, future research employing a public goods game (PGG) is needed to identify collaborative behaviours of school committee members when gender identity is salient. In the laboratory setting, it will be possible to understand the motives behind individual female and male members' decision to cooperate with other school committee members in provision of public goods. More importantly, the PGG may provide

information on appropriate collaboration incentives and free-riding disincentives for consideration in future school autonomy reforms.

Although school autonomy reforms tend to foster gender composition, this paper has shown that the increase in the number of female members of SMCs may not necessarily lead to collective action in school committees in all contexts. Hence, qualitative studies should be conducted to better understand how school-level actors adopt, interpret and use the managerial power devolved to them by SBM programmes relative to their gender norms. The knowledge of such social contexts is critical because the presence of gender inequality makes school management a complex process and there is no policy prescription that can be used to deal with such complexity without facing any challenges.

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