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Challenges Encountered by School Committees in Enhancing Pupils Access to Primary Education in Ruvuma Region, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

School committees in primary schools play a vital role in linking community and the government towards achieving educational goals in fostering access to primary education. This study explored challenges faced by school committees as they engage in ensuring access to primary education in Ruvuma region, Tanzania. Grounded on Open System Theory, the study adopted pragmatism research paradigm and mixed methods approach to determine challenges encountered by school committees. Convergent parallel research design was employed in data collection, analysis, presentation of the findings and discussion. The study involved 173 participants obtained through probability sampling techniques using Nassiuma's and Kothari formula. Quantitative data were collected using self-administered questionnaires distributed to members of school committees (161) and qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with district primary education officers (n=2) and ward education officers (11). Validity and reliability of the research instruments were conducted through expert judgement and Cronbach's alpha. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tool (SPSS – version 27), where the perception of school committee members on challenges faced by school committees scored with overall scale mean (Mean=2.67, Std=0.72), indicating that it is moderately challenging. Qualitative findings correlated with these results as highlighted that school committees largely encountered by challenges related to financial limitations, training gaps and lack of parental involvement in school activities particularly contribution for school meals program. The study also found that a notable minority perceived that bureaucratic procedures in implementation of school projects and economic hardship among parents sometimes hinders school committees' initiatives in improving access to primary education. The study recommends for government to: increase school funding facilitating the maintenance of school infrastructure, improving community awareness and provision of regular training to school committee members to boost school committees' initiatives in improving pupils' access to primary education.

Keywords: School Committees**,** Parental Involvement**,** Training Gaps, Access to Education, Resources Limitation

1. INTRODUCTION

In Sub-Saharan African Countries, governments have been striving ensuring quality and equitable prim-

ary education for all children, but still barriers and challenges such as resources allocation and accountability continue to hinder access to primary education (Zickafoose et al., 2024). Achieving the educational policy goals in provision of primary education depends on diverse network of actors including government, government partners, parents, education stakeholders and community. Community engagement in primary education through school committee has long history and underwent different changes in different countries through education decentralization policy aimed to meet the international goals in improving access to primary education. School-Based Management policy was adopted as strategy to increase parental and community involvement in decision making processes in schools (Anabo, 2024). Community engagement in education system through collaboration between parents and schools is crucial for promoting quality education, academic achievements and enhancing access to education (UNESCO, 2022). In India stakeholder engagement in school governance improved educational quality and promoted education policy in enhancing equity and inclusive education (Abdeladim, & Yahyaoui, 2024; Orge et al., 2025).

In Tanzania, adoption of school based management aimed in ensuring that decision making within schools should be made not only by head teacher and teachers but also by parents through school committees. School committee was legally established through Education Act No. 25 of 1978 which formally highlighted school committees' roles in ensuring access to primary education. Since then changes have been made particularly on membership and its composition with intention to promote the implementation of existing educational policy goals. It is undeniable truth that school committee plays positive significant roles in ensuring pupils access to education in their localities. For instance, literature indicates that school committees created community awareness on importance of education and promoted school meals provision in primary schools which in turn increased pupils' attendance, enrollment and retentions in schools (George, 2025, Mmari et al., 2025; Simbeye, 2025, Roothaert et al., 2021).

Despite of the efforts made by governments in engaging community in school management through school committees which evidenced that they have positively contributed in improving access to primary education, yet there are significant challenges which are repeatedly reported in different countries including Tanzania. The common challenges reported in many countries including training gaps, financial limitations, lack of parental involvement in implementation of school programs and socio-economic status of parents (see Beyioku et al., 2026, Nizevimana et al., 2021; Matonya, 2022; Barce, 2025). Education governance and financing are the fundamental constraints encounter the governments in implementation of education policy goals which sometimes hinders the improvement of school infrastructure, causes irregular training and inadequate teaching and learning materials in schools (Word Bank, 2023). Budget allocation and expenditure on education have been inadequate in both developing and developed countries where by global spending on education falls short of international targets resulting on shortage of necessary school infrastructures and facilities such as classrooms and libraries (Magidanga, 2021).

Inadequate parental involvement in implementation of school feeding programs also seemed to be a challenging which sometimes hinders school committees initiatives to improve access to primary education. School feeding programs facilitates access to educational outcomes including sustained attendance, retentions, better academic achievements and improved engagement among primary school pupils especially in rural districts where household food insecurity is prevalent (Daftari & Umeodum, 2022; Ndiege, 2026). Such challenges raise the questions whether school committees in Ruvuma region

encounter the same problems. Therefore, this study assessed challenges faced school committees as they engage in ensuring access to primary education in Ruvuma region. The study was guided by the following research question: What are the challenges encountered by school committees as they engage in ensuring access to primary education?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

School committees were established as mechanisms for strengthening primary education ensuring that educational policies translated into practice. This well-structured primary education management system aimed to resolve challenges such as irregular attendance, limited parental engagement, declining enrollment, and weak accountability and enhancing pupils' access to primary education. In implementation of their assigned roles and responsibilities school committees in developed and developing countries encounter different challenges. Most of school committees fail to implement their responsibilities properly due to the lack of managerial skills, lack of financial skills, limited financial capacity, insufficient awareness of their roles and responsibilities (Mwanjisi & Ambakyise, 2022). Limited knowledge of school committee members seemed to be a challenge that hinders the effectiveness of school committee members and management of schools. For instance, Agbi et al (2024) observed that school committees have limited knowledge in School Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) preparation and due to unaware of their roles they used more time in monitoring the implementation of SPIP than other assigned responsibilities such as monitoring of pupils admission, academic performance, teachers and pupils attendance and other non-academic activities in schools. This highlights that school committees are selective in executing their duties due to lack of managerial and administrative skills. Low awareness on leading educational policy and regulations also is observed to be challenging for school committee members in implementing their roles in different counties.

In India low awareness among school committee members regarding the Right to Education Act (2009) hindered the effectiveness of school committees (Wardak & Narwal (2025). Low administrative skills among head teachers also can affect the performance of school committee members in implementation of their responsibilities due to teachers' misunderstanding of the importance of school committees, lack of cooperation from school leaders (Berhanu, 2023). This also related to ineffective relationship among school committee members, delay in decision making at school level, lack of motivation, and non–implementation of school committees' recommendations (Owusu-Addo et al., 2024). This is probably, caused by the lack of in-service training among school leaders which is positively related to the effectiveness of school committee members. Limited financial support and economic hardship among parents also reported as challenging for school committees in implementation of their responsibilities. Inadequate school funding can hinder the school committees' roles in ensuring improved school infrastructure since they cannot afford to construct or renovation of classrooms to accommodate all pupils including those with special educational needs. Economic hardship is one of the obstacles preventing among the community members from being actively involved in their children's education (Oranga et al, 2022). Therefore, this study seeks to determine challenges encountered by school committees and its impact on pupils' access to education.

2.2 Open System Theory

The study was guided by Open System Theory (OST) developed by Ludwig Van Bertalanffy in 1968 as an attempt to understand how system exchange matter with the environment. Ludwig Van Bertalanffy

model posits that organizations are not self-contained, but dynamic entities that survive by interacting with and adapting their external environments. The theory is relevant to the study on challenges faced by school committees since it stress on interdependence, relationships and interactions among its components and views education system as open network that continuously exchange information from environments (Khuzwayo, 2020). Educational systems needs feedback and primary schools through school committees need feedback about their performance which sometimes assists in management of schools, while parents also need feedback from school or school committees regarding achievement in academic and non-academic activities (Elujekwute et al. 2022). Primary schools continuously interact with school community and depend on supports from educational stakeholders to achieve desired education goals. When the government, education administrators, school community, parents and teachers play their part and work collaboratively, school committees' efforts in promoting access to education will be achieved successfully. Furthermore, open system relies on a continuous circle of inputs, transformations, outputs and feedback to remain effective. Despite its weaknesses, including the perspectives that an organizations survival depends on relationship with external environment, open system theory's assumptions can be useful in minimizing challenges encountered by school committees in particular in enhancing pupils access to primary education.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

Maisaroh et al. (2024) investigated the role of School Committees in school facilities and infrastructure management in Indonesia. The study employed descriptive qualitative research design and used observation, interviews and documentary analysis methods to gather comprehensive insights from school committee members in one public primary school. The findings revealed that school committee has established schedules for routine maintenance of school infrastructure and created conducive learning environment for all pupils to align with inclusive education vision. However, the results indicated that in performing their roles school committees often faces difficulties in effective coordination due to lack of facility and maintenance skills, and political antagonism leading to inconsistencies in plans and activity implemented. The current study concurs with current Maisaroh et al.'s findings as it highlighted that school committees play a great role in managing school facilities and infrastructure, and further indicated challenges they encounter including training gaps and political leaders interference.

In Ghana, Agbi et al. (2024) examined school committees' knowledge and involvement in school improvement plan: Implication for quality education in South Tongu District. The study adopted mixed methods approach and cross-sectional survey design. The finding revealed the school committee members had limited knowledge and had not been involved in School Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) preparation. The study suggested the need to conduct periodic training workshops, reward success, and provide clear guidelines to increase school committee members' knowledge.

Burani and Rashid (2023) employed cross sectional and correlational designs to examine the influence of financial and administration skills on the performance of school committees in primary schools in Uganda. The study found that there is strong significant relationship between managerial skills, (which include; financial and administration skills) and performance of school committees. However, it was revealed that school committees in Yumbe district were not aware of the skills required in them in terms of finances. Moreover, they don't aware of their administrative roles such as assessment of school performance, improve of quality of education, monitoring of teachers and pupils attendance which highlighted the training gaps.

Mmari et al. (2025) investigated the key challenges faced by school feeding committees in sustaining school feeding programs in public primary schools in Tanzania. The study employed convergent parallel design whereby quantitative data were collected through cross-sectional survey, while qualitative data were gathered through interviews and focus group discussion methods. Findings noted the challenges in implementation of school feeding programs including insufficient and irregular contributions due to widespread poverty among parents, limited funding for school meals program, lack of training for school feeding committee, and weak financial management skills among some committee members. These challenges reflected those challenges encountered by school committees while they straggling in promoting school meals provision in schools. The current study concurs with Mmari et al.'s findings highlighting that parental involvement in school development programs remains a critical in ensuring improved access to primary education.

Similarly, Shayo et al. (2026) employed descriptive research design and mixed methods approach to investigate challenges encountered by school committees in monitoring of the implementation of Universal Primary Education in Tanzania. The study findings demonstrated that school committees are faced with challenges related to limited knowledge and skills in financial management and limited financial support in the implementation of their responsibilities. Limited knowledge among some members of school committees sometimes caused conflicts and misunderstanding in implementation and monitoring of UPE frameworks. The study recommended empowerment of school committees through regular training and capacity-building initiatives to enhance effectiveness in monitoring of the implementation of UPE. The current study concurs with Shayo et al.'s findings, highlighting that addressing limited knowledge and skills among school committee members are crucial in promoting access to primary education.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed mixed methods approach under the pragmatist research paradigm. Philosophical assumptions on mixed methods approach is that both qualitative and quantitative aspects are complementary and not substitutes of each other (Lakshmi, 2019). The selection of pragmatism paradigm based on the fact that it allows researcher to look a research problem in a holistic way rather than in unit-directional way (Lakshmi, 2019). A convergent parallel research design was adapted to cross-check the findings for better understanding of research problem through integration of statistical data with a contextual insights of qualitative data. The study was conducted in Ruvuma region Tanzania. It was confined to 2 districts (Mbinga and Tunduru), 54 primary schools and 11 wards. A total of 174 participants were included in this study comprising the sample size of 161 members of the school committees, 2 District Primary Education Officers (DPEO) and 11 Ward Education Officers (WEO). The inclusion of samples from multiple groups enabled the researcher triangulating the statistical evidence with participants' perceptions.

Closed-ended questionnaires were used to collect data from members of school committees while qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews methods involved DPEOs and WEOs. After data collection the Validity of questionnaire was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) or the indicator loadings on each construct which indicated acceptable with maximum of AVE of 0.674. The Cronbach's Alphas coefficients were used to assess the reliability of Likert-type surveys whereby the computed Cronbach's alpha coefficients was 0.777 showing good internal consistency of the instrument. Comparatively, ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative data researcher addressed four

criteria: ensured credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These were reached through triangulation of results, thick descriptions, recording the results and reflexivity through the acknowledgement of other work.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive analysis with the aid of SPSS Version 27. Primarily frequencies/percentages; mean and standard deviation were used to examine quantitative data on challenges faced by school committees. Basing on Braun and (Clarke 2022), qualitative data were analyzed thematically following systemic six-phases: familiarizing with data; generating initial codes, generating initial themes, developing and reviewing themes, refining, defining, and naming themes and writing up report. Researcher was put in consideration of ethical issues through adherence to ethical standards set for social science and the requirements of Tanzanian research authority such as ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, use of informed consent form, research clearance and permission from responsible authorities. To ensure validity of research, the researcher must adhere to ethical guidelines as while conducting and reporting research findings (Hasan et al., 2021). This is of very important in protecting participants' safety, ensuring data integrity and build public trust in scientific results.

4.0 RESULTS

This section presents the findings that were intended to answer the research question of this study "what are the challenges encountered by school committees as they engage in ensuring access to primary education?

Quantitative phase

The quantitative data analysis through descriptive statistics aimed to determine the perceptions of school committees regarding the challenge they encounter while engaging in enhancing access to primary education. Challenges facing school committees were determined based on five-Likert scale which scaled through 1 = Not a challenge (NC), 2 = Slightly Challenging (SC), 3 = Moderately Challenging (MC), 4 = Very Challenging (VC) to 5 = Major challenge (MC).

This construct used ten indicators related to challenges encountered by school committee which was measured using percentage, mean and standard deviation. For simplicity of analysis, researcher divided the items related to challenges encountered by school committees into three categories including; administration and stakeholders' challenges for (CH2, CH3, CH4 and CH6); government and leadership challenges (CH7, CH 3 and CH9); and resources limitations and training gaps (CH1, CH5 and CH10).

Table 1 below presents the responses of school committee members (N=161) for each item related to challenges facing school committee in primary schools.

Composite Score rating scale: 4.21-5.00=Very high, 3.41-4.20=High, 2.61-3.40= Average/Moderate, 1.81-2.60= Low, 1.00-1.80=Very low (Abu-Baker et al., 2019).

Table 1: Challenges encountered by School Committees

Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
CH1 - Inadequate funding limits the activities of the school committee.	161	3.75	1.08	High perception
CH2 - Lack of parental involvement hinders school committee initiatives.	161	3.59	1.15	High perception

Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
CH3 - Bureaucratic procedures slow down the implementation of school projects.	161	2.55	1.42	Low perception
CH4 - The school committee faces resistance from some teachers and parents.	161	2.00	1.15	Low perception
CH5 - There is a lack of proper training for school committee members.	161	3.76	1.26	High perception
CH6 - There is poor working relationship between head teacher and school committee.	161	1.56	1.11	Very low perception
CH7- There is a conflict between (PTA) members and school committee in monitoring of school activities	161	1.67	1.15	Very low perception
CH8 - There is a lack of accountability and transparence on the part of head teacher undermined school committee performance.	161	1.65	1.20	Very low perception
CH9 - There is interference from local political leaders in implementation of school feeding program.	161	2.69	1.53	Moderate perception
CH10 - Economic hardship contributes to high dropout rates among children from disadvantaged background.	161	3.43	1.35	High perception
Overall scale mean		**2.67**	**0.72**	

Source: Field Data (2025)

Descriptive statistics in Table 1 show that, school committees face challenges while performing their duties. The overall scale mean for the assessed construct was (Mean=2.67, SD=0.72), indicating moderate perception on challenges facing school committees as they engage in ensuring pupils access to primary education. Four of the ten items were rated high. Those items were lack of proper training (M = 3.76, SD = 1.26), inadequate funding (M = 3.75, SD = 1.08), lack of parental involvement (M = 3.59, SD = 1.15), and economic hardship among parents (M = 3.43, SD = 1.35). Poor working relationship, conflict between (PTA) members and school committee, lack of accountability and transparence on the part of head teacher, bureaucratic procedures and resistance from some teachers and parents were rated low. However, all ten items had the largest standard deviation indicating the high variation on items responses.

Qualitative Phase

Three themes were generated from respondent responses on challenges facing school committees including administrative and stakeholders' challenges, Government and leadership challenges, and resources limitation and training gap.

Table 2 indicates the perceptions of district primary education officers and ward education officers (N=13) regarding challenges encountered by school committees as they engage in ensuring access to primary education.

Note: Frequency = Number of respondents mentioned the sub-theme at least once (%)

Table 2 Perceived Level of Challenges Encountered by School Committees

Category	Themes	Theme Description	Frequency (%)
Challenges encountered by School Committees	Administrative and stakeholders challenges	Lack of parental involvement hinders school meals program	8(62%)
		Bureaucratic procedures in implementation of school projects	4(31%)
		Resistance from some teachers and parents	2(15%)
		Poor working relationship between head teacher and school committee	1(8%)
	Government and leadership challenges	Conflict between Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members and school committee members in monitoring of school activities	2(15%)
		Lack of accountability and transparence on the part of head teacher undermined school committee performance	2(15%)
		Interference from local political leaders in implementation of school feeding program	5(38%)
	Resources limitation and Training gap	Inadequate funding which limits the activities of the school committee	9(69%)
		Lack of proper training for school committee members.	10(77%)
		Economic hardship among parents contributes to high dropout rates	7(54%)

Source: Field Data 2025.

The qualitative data in Table 2 indicates that, six sub-themes were mentioned least often while only four were mentioned by more than half of the 13 informants. Sub-themes with least mentions were poor working relationship, conflict between Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members and school committee, resistance from some teachers and parents, lack of accountability and transparence on the part of head teacher, bureaucratic procedures and interference. Mentioned frequently with large number of respondents were lack of proper training, inadequate funding, lack of parental involvement and economic hardship among parents.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Both quantitative and qualitative findings (Table 1 & Table 2) indicated that school committees mostly faced with challenges related to resources limitations and training gaps, and parental involvement. They moderately encounter difficulties in implementation of school related projects/programmes caused by local political leaders' interference and bureaucratic procedures.

Descriptive result indicated that majority of respondents found resource limitations, training gaps and lack of parental involvement as very challenging which sometimes hinders their initiatives in promoting access to primary education. Statistical data indicated the magnitude of the problems regarding the following statements; inadequate funding limits the activities of the school committee (Mean=3.75, SD=1.08); economic hardship contributes to high dropout rates among children from disadvantaged background (Mean=3.43, SD=1.35); lack of proper training for school committee members (Mean=3.76, SD=1.26); lack of parental involvement hinders school committee initiatives (Mean=3.59, SD=1.15). These four challenges were perceived as very challenging which sometimes affects school committee efforts in improving school enrolment, attendance and retention. This descriptive results correlates with qualitative findings as shown in Table 2 that, inadequate funding, lack of proper training, economic hardship among parents and lack of parental involvement were frequently mentioned by more than half of the 13 informants compared to other themes. Basing on the findings, the study suggests that there are critical challenges facing school committees which require major strategic adjustments to overcome. However, descriptive results indicated notable minority perceived (Mean=2.69, SD=1.53) that there is interference from local political leaders in implementation of school feeding program which implies that it requires moderate efforts to resolve, whereas a small minority perceived (Mean=2.55, SD=1.42) that bureaucratic procedures slow down the implementation of school projects indicating that it requires minor adjustment to resolve. Conversely, the statistical results indicated that there is no challenge related to resistance from some teachers and parents, working relationship between head teacher and school committee, conflict between PTA members and school committee, lack of accountability and transparence on the part of head teacher undermined school committee performance. The same applied qualitative results concurs with descriptive result as shown in Table 2 that a substantial number of respondents perceived that sometimes school committees in their localities encountered with political antagonism and bureaucratic procedures which sometimes slow down school committee initiatives. It is also found that there is neither poor working relationship nor resistances from parents and teachers.

Regarding the challenges related to parental involvement, inadequate funding, training gaps and economic hardship among parents the following extracts attest this:

'School meals provision in primary schools is still challenging in my ward. Currently, only 4 schools out of 6 provides food for pupils, this is caused by among parents not contribute for their children' (Ward education officer no.4, August 2025).

'During the rainy season, in my ward many parents especially in poor family move from their permanent settlement to live temporarily in their farm leaving their children alone in their houses without control of parents'…….this habit increases number of truants and irregular attendance in schools (Ward education officer no.5, August 2025).

'It is difficult for village governments to provide funds for school activities such as classroom renovations, building toilets or making new desks. This has caused significantly to some children's dislike of school' (District primary education officer no.2, September 2025).

'……no training organized at the council level to build the capacity of the school committee members and there are many complain from the school committee members claiming that training has been provided only to PTA members (Ward education officer no.5, September 2025).

The extracts above reveal that there is a household-level factors including economic hardship among parents and inadequate parental involvement which affects negatively the implementation of school programmes such as school meals provision and sometimes causes irregular attendance in schools. The analysis further shows that the government do not provide adequate school funds for improvement of infrastructure. The findings also reveal that, there is lack of training for school committee members. Those challenges sometimes hinder school committees' efforts in improving pupils' access to primary education.

On the part of local political leaders interference and bureaucratic procedures seemed to be moderately challenging. This is evidenced by the following quotations:

'Sometimes pressure from local political leaders caused among parents not contribute for school meals provision…...they also used to persuade community members not to contribute for any means in school projects implementation claiming that the government disburses enough money' (Ward education officer no.3, September 2025). '

Local political leaders have great influence in their localities and we expected their support in ensuring that all parents contributes for their children's school meals …….but still some parents do not contribute even if they have great economic potential' (District primary education officer no.1, August 2025).

Regarding bureaucratic procedures, one DPEO shared:

'Implementation of school projects follows a systematic procedures especially during the initial stage……..sometimes challenges happens due to head teachers inconsistences in preparation of required documents and other proceedings in bursary and procurement offices at district level' (District primary education officer no.2, September 2025).

The above extracts shows that there is notable difficulties such as political antagonism and bureaucratic procedures in implementation of school projects which sometimes causes a delay in completion of school projects.

The findings of the study further reveal that school committees not faced by any of the following difficulties: resistances from some teachers and parents; poor working relationship between head teacher and school committee; conflict between PTA members and school committee, and lack of accountability and transparence on the part of head teachers. This is evidenced by extracts below:

'School committees in this ward are very cooperative, they cooperate with teachers and parents ……there is neither misunderstanding nor resistances from teachers and parents against school committees in schools' (Ward education officer no.3, August, 2025).

'Working relationship among head teachers and school committee not a challenge in this district, they work collaboratively ensuring improved access to primary education' (District primary education officer no.2, September 2025).

'School committees and PTA members are very cooperative in making follow-up against truants; many prospective pupils have been identified by school committee members and reported to parents and PTA members for further actions' (District primary education officer no.1, August 2025).

'Head teachers are accountable and mostly ensures transparence in utilization of school funds.....these are not a challenge in schools' (Ward education officer no.7, September 2025).

The above extracts reveal that there is no resistance from teachers and parents against school committees enabling them performing their roles smoothly. The analysis further reveals that there is good working relationship between school committees and head teachers, they work collaboratively ensuring that access to primary education is enhanced in their localities. The findings also reveal that school committees cooperate with PTA members in promoting school enrolment, attendance and pupils' retention. Moreover, the findings reveal that head teachers are accountable and transparent in performing their roles which motivated school committees to participate in decision making processes.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings show that school committees sometimes faced by challenges while engaging in ensuring access to primary education. The study results reveal that resources limitation and training gaps as critical challenges which hinders school committees' efforts in ensuring pupils access to primary education. Lack of financial support from local government authorities and economic hardships among parents seemed to be very challenging and sometimes limits school committee initiatives in improving school infrastructure and school meals provisions to enhance increased pupils enrolment, attendance and retention. These findings are consistence with the study by Gonjo et al. (2025) who found that ineffective governance, financial constraints and limited community capacity hinders the sustainability of school projects and suggested the need for financial support mechanisms. This suggests that adequate funding in education promotes education quality and enhances access to education. Kwaghkule and Chiangi (2024) argues that adequate funding in education has significant impact on infrastructural facilities, proper training of school committee members and teachers, and promotes implementation of different programs planned by primary schools.

Economic hardship among some parents is one of sources for parents of children not effectively involved in educational initiatives and activities. Sometimes economic hardship among parents caused irregular attendance in schools and hindered the implementation of school feeding program. The findings support results of several similar studies. For instance, the findings similar to these were reported in the studies conducted by Mchia and Mwila (2024), and Barce (2025) whereby various findings were observed. They found that; parents with high economic status were more actively involved in implementation of school projects compared to those with economic hardship, and parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds are reportedly more active in their children academic work than parents from lower socio-economic background. The findings further reveal that some school committee members lacks financial management skills and knowledge about their roles. The findings were supported by World Bank (2024), reported that lack of training and capacity building among school committee members about their roles and responsibilities hinders effective engagement.

The findings further seem to indicate that there is lack of parental involvement in implementation of school programs including school meals provision whereby some parents not contribute for their children. It was observed that among parents fail to contribute/donate for school feeding programs implementation in their localities due to economic hardship and others parents are reluctant. Mmari et al. (2025) similarly reported that there were insufficient and irregular parental contributions for school feeding program due to widespread poverty among parents whose children attend public primary schools. Lack of parental involvement in school activities hinders schools committees' initiatives in improving academic achievements, pupils discipline, attendance and retention. Similarly, the broader literature (Deysolong, 2023; Toroba, 2025) similarly argues that lack of active parental involvement has

positive significant relationship with learners engagement academically, attendance, discipline and emotional well-being. This implies that adequate supports for parents with limited resources is required ensuring that they are actively involved in school activities.

The findings also reveal that school committee faced by noticeable difficulties in implementation of school feeding program caused by interference from local political leaders. In Tanzania political interference affects school governance, hinders school development and effective implementation of school projects (World Bank, 2021). These findings align with the earlier empirical evidence (Kapelela et al.. 2025; Odukoya, 2025) showing that political interference limits the decision-making power of school governing bodies and reducing their autonomies, but when political leaders are responsible, they positively influences school development. The findings suggest that the aforementioned challenges limits effectiveness of school committees in enhancing pupils' access to primary education in Tanzania. Similarly, Gaspar and Kitula (2025) argued that challenges including low funding, poor infrastructure, political interference and weak community support are the among factors affecting the implementation of school programs such as school feeding programs leading to unreliable meal schedule, irregular feeding services and disruption in food provision. Besides, it was indicated that bureaucratic procedures in the implementation of school projects is slightly challenging, the use of Force Account and PPRA minimized the bureaucracy in implementation of school projects as Mfugale (2022) unveiled that, the use of Force Account had reduced a number of bureaucracies in handling secondary school projects and increased accuracy rate of implemented secondary school projects.

Apart from those challenges observed, the findings further revealed that there is good relationship between PTA members and school committee. The finding is consistency with the study by Okaforcha et al. (2025) assertions that PTA members work hand in hand with school committees in identification of problematic areas and sought a ways of combating them so as to meet pupils' needs; The findings also revealed that no challenge related to accountability or transparence on the part of head teachers as Vuje et al. (2025) found that head teachers implement multiple school accountability in managing public through planning, communicating, mobilizing, decision-making and collaborating. No resistance from teachers and parents against school committee members. Parents and teachers collaboratively with school committee which concur with Nurmaning et al. (2023) who found that school committee acts as mediator between the school, parents and the community in conveying aspirations, input and socialization related to school programs.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The study has determined challenges encountered by school committees as they engage in ensuring access to primary education in Ruvuma region, Tanzania. Based on the research results the study concluded that: Resources limitations, training gaps, economic hardship among parents and lack of parental involvement are very challenging in Ruvuma region. Therefore it can be viewed that inadequate government budget in primary education attributed to shortage of teachers, school infrastructure including classrooms and toilets endorsement which sometimes hinders school committees' initiatives in improving school attendance, enrollment and retentions.

Lack of parental involvement hinders school feeding programmes implementation due to the fact that among parents not contributes for their children school meals. This reaffirms that parents not take care about importance of school meals provision as only few parents contributes regularly. Lack of training

and capacity building for school committee have negative impact on school committee performance due to failure in promoting educational policy and interpretation of circulars and guidelines provided by government. It was evident that school committees have limited knowledge and skills in managing school funds utilization especially Capitation Grant due to lack of financial management skills.

Economic hardship among parents has negative impact on implementation of school programs and caused irregular pupils attendance. This is because the study found that poor family leaves their permanent settlements and temporally living in small farms especially during rainy seasons leading to irregular attendance and dropout in schools. It was also noted that a large number of parents from poor family, their parents don't contributes for school meals. The study furthermore concludes that there are notable difficulties in implementation of school activities for both academic and non-academic caused by local political leaders' interference and bureaucratic procedures which sometimes causes the delay in implementation of school projects.

The study also concludes that school committees not faced by challenges related to relationship with head teachers, teachers, parents, PTA members and accountability and transparency on the part of head teachers. This is because the study revealed that school committees work cooperatively and collaborate with school stakeholders including teachers, parents and school community ensuring that school goals are achieved. On the part of head teachers it was found that they are accountable and transparent in implementing their roles and responsibilities which attributed to effectiveness of school committees in increased enrollment, attendance and retention to enhance pupils' access primary education.

IMPLICATIONS

The study findings suggest that effectiveness of school committees in performing their responsibilities can positively contribute in increased pupils' enrollment, regular attendance and retention. By understanding these, the government through Ministry of Education, Science and Technology can empower school committee members ensuring that all roles assigned to school committee are implemented accordingly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding the study findings and discussion above, it is recommended that:

1. Since inadequate government funding limits school resources and sometimes hinders the school initiatives in improving pupils' access to education. The government should endorse more funds for school infrastructure maintenance and construction of new classrooms to meet the increased number of pupils enrolled.
2. Since parental involvement is largely limited in implementation of school feeding progammes. Local government authorities should facilitate school committees' efforts in creating awareness campaign and community sensitization programs on importance of school meals provision ensuring that all parents participate effectively contributing for their children.
3. Strong collaborative relationships between school committees and educational stakeholders including local political leaders to create educational ecosystems that enhances pupils access to primary education
4. The government through Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should provide regular training and capacity building to school committee members regarding the guiding educational

policy, and improving their knowledge and financial management skills for monitoring of school expenditures including Capitation Grant utilization.

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