

A Theoretical Evaluation of Community Participation in Nyanguku Ward Dam Construction Project in Geita, Tanzania

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Development Planning, Community Participation, Empowerment, Motivation Theories, Public Good Theory

Date logs:

Received: Des 17, 2025

Reviewed: Des 22, 2025

Accepted: Feb 08, 2026

Published: Feb 11, 2026

How To Cite:

Kiula, K.P., de Vries, W.T., Kalori, J. J. (2026). A Theoretical Evaluation of Community Participation in Nyanguku Ward Dam Construction Project in Geita, Tanzania, *Marcapada: Jurnal Kebijakan Pertanahan*, 5(2), 179-194. <https://doi.org/10.31292/mj.v5i2.195>

ABSTRACT

Land use planning projects in Tanzania face low participation. Currently we do not know why this is so or under which conditions participation could be high or low. Hence, the research objective is to unveil why or under which conditions participation can be high or low. We use two theoretical perspectives on participation to test this: 1) public good theory stating that participation is low if the project concerns a public good. 2. Participation motivation theory (3 types), stating that people participate based on their transaction benefits. The test case concerns a dam construction funded by the Tanzania Social Action Fund III. Communities are assumed to participate in making decisions throughout the project. We used questionnaires to unveil how and when people participated. The findings reflect the claims of public good theory in a very few aspects. However, social exchange theory, one of the motivational theories seems to reflect participation behavior the best. We recommend further research to investigate factors for amplifying social exchange theory to enhance participation in land use projects in developing countries.

A. Introduction

The Nyanguku dam construction project is a project undertaken in Nyanguku Ward, Geita, Tanzania. The project started in 2022 with the objective of providing water for livestock and irrigation farming for the people living in Nyanguku, specifically those living within the villages of Nyanguku, Shinamwendwa and other nearby villages. The dam will increase agricultural productivity within the villages of Nyanguku. Irrigation increases productivity of the cultivated agricultural land. Land is at the heart of the agricultural sector (Mouris & Setiawan, 2019). Rural transformation is underpinned in the progressive agricultural productivity (Kamaludin, 2023). Agriculture is the source of food, employment, raw materials and export earnings (Echoh et al., 2017). The project is implemented by the Geita District Council through the funding of the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF). Generally, dams are constructed to fulfill one or all of the following motives; to produce energy, to facilitate irrigation agriculture, to provide domestic and industrial water, and to control floods (Dixon et al., 1989). Participation of communities, and consultation and communication with communities are

therefore of utmost importance (Naku et al., 2021; Saragih et al., 2024). It helps to assess the problems which may arise from the projects and to support the formulation of solution strategies to solve or address these problems. Documented and anecdotal evidence in Tanzania reveals, however, that participation of communities in such large projects is limited, despite the legislative requirements for this (Malipula, 2022; Fredrick & Ahmad, 2023). Since its independence, Tanzania has embraced the idea of people participation in its development planning processes (Britwum, 2022). Participation has been at the center of the Tanzania's development policies and strategies (Marsland, 2006; Nyerere, 1968; Poncian, 2019). These policies include the 1996 Community Development Policy, which reiterates on involving the grassroots in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of development plans (URT, 1996; Poncian, 2019). The government understands the importance of people's involvement in the development processes (Marsland, 2006; Iddi & Nuhu, 2018; Swai, 2016; URT, 2010; Poncian, 2019).

Participation in development projects has been low in Tanzania (Fredrick & Ahmad, 2023). This fact and other participation insights are revealed by several authors including Matekele et al., (2025) who wrote on leadership capacity and financial reporting quality in local government authorities: evidence from Tanzania, and they revealed that political loyalty leadership, rule-following, network governance, and accountability were the factors influencing good quality of the financial reporting in local government authorities. In his work "Implementation of Tanzania's Development Vision 2025: Local Government Authorities' Endeavors and Challenges", Rugeiyamu (2024) revealed several weaknesses that make it difficult for local government authorities in Tanzania to turn policies and programs into practice. Thus, Rugeiyamu recommended that a substantial degree of autonomy should be granted to local government authorities to make them participate effectively in realizing the projected goals. Mlay & Mbirigenda (2023) wrote on youth perception of participation in decision-making in local communities in urban Tanzania in which they use Dar es Salaam City Council as their case study. Their findings revealed that youth have misconceptions on the meaning of participation in decision making and low awareness of youth on the existing development programs, as well as lack of awareness among youth on policies and government guidelines for youth participation in decision-making in their communities. Lastly, Acevedo (2025) wrote on fostering human capital in Tanzania's rapidly growing population. In his work, Acevedo explores a trend of changes since the officiation of the ECF program in which he considered priority in social spending and the challenges associated with closing the gaps in education and health service.

Nevertheless, it is unknown why participation tends to be low in Tanzania. There is limited insight into how the consultation and communication occur and under which circumstances participation, communication, and consultation is effective or not effective. Hence, there is an urgent need to understand this better, both from a practitioner's perspective and a scientific perspective. Given this, the research objective of this study is to unveil when and under which conditions, or for which types of projects, participation is high or low.

Before discussing the basic tenets of explanatory theories to address the research question, there is a need to define the basic concepts of this research, being participation, communication, and (social) inclusion. The article continues by evaluating which theoretical perspectives would explain the

current situation and which could help to derive recommendations for land use planning and engineering practitioners to formulate more responsible and inclusive projects. After this follows Section 3, which discusses the research design for data collection and analysis strategies. Section 4 presents the findings of the research on both the factors affecting participation and the community participation levels. The subsequent Section 5 discusses the findings in view of the theoretical and analytical perspective. Section 6 concludes by providing the answer to the key research question and deriving recommendations for further research.

Defining participation

Several theories explain and predict why, when and under which conditions people participate, either as individuals and/or as groups or as a collective. These include: Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Public Good Theory (PGT). Before explaining how the theories conceptualize and predict participation outcomes, we first present how we formulate our basic concepts and definitions.

Ryan et al (2020) explains that community engagement is enabled by community consultation, communication triad of community information, and community participation, triad elements are made up by the levels of power sharing and decision making, the nature of communicative and behavioral interactivity, and how active community members are developing meaning and solving difficult social challenges or suggesting remedies to problems focusing a targeted community (Janse & Konijnendijk, 2007; Ryan et al., 2020). People tend to participate if the government system grants their wishes (Teorell, 2006). Burgess et al (2021) believe that a decision to participate in programs is the result of pre-existing social dialogues, which aim to promote learning in the society, leading to equity which in turn will produce and maintain trust. According to Barrutia & Echebarria (2019) participation requires however time, energy and economic resources as well as opportunity cost. Participation is facilitated by constant and clear communication between parts involved (Sveklaitė & Šukvietienė, 2021). Through social communication, individuals are exposed to their lack of knowledge which is not easy to be realized in the absence of such communication (Ott, 2018). Social communication also facilitates social mobilization hence clarifies matters related to resources, time and duties to be performed (Ott, 2018).

There two considerations when involving people in a project. Ideologically, people's involvement is a way of responding to the political demands of a functioning democracy, advocating that people should be informed and well involved in matters of their interest (Tosun 2000). Operationally, non-participatory plans are always failing to accommodate the genuine preferences and needs of the beneficiaries. Through genuine participation, a community gets its fair share of deciding on matters of its well-being (Tosun, 2000).

According to Paul et al. (1989) there are pre-conditions for participation to flourish, namely: focusing on empowering and capacitating people; possessing provisions which allow stakeholders interaction; possessing provisions which call for frequently stakeholders dialogues; and preparing beneficiaries for the operation of the project. The (perceived) benefits of participation determine whether people participate or not (Erhan, 2023). These include hedonic benefits (such as enjoyment

and entertainment based on individual preferences (Kumar & Kumar, 2020)), and benefits which are more rooted in advantages for the entire community. Regardless of the individual motivations and perceived benefits, the necessity that people participate is to enable people with a space to have their share in the decisions affecting their wellbeing (Poncian, 2019). Participation of stakeholders makes them willing to protect, maintain and manage the development project (Ruspita et al., 2025).

Arnstein's model is the highly recognized model of participation in planning (Varwell, 2022). This model was introduced in 1969 and still holds water (Terdoe, 2024). Arnstein presents an 8-rungs model of participation with three distinctive degree levels of power created by participation quality in the rung (White & Langenheim, 2021). At the bottom of her ladder, Arnstein has placed two rungs which are manipulation followed by therapy. On manipulation, people are being used as rubber stamp in organs like advisory committees to show that people were engaged. On the therapy rung, powerlessness is associated with mental illness and people are engaged for the sake of curing them. Manipulation and therapy create a state of no participation (Bazaraa et al., 2022). The next category involves informing, consultation and placation (Fahik et al., 2024). In informing, people are informed on the planning processes but there is no room for feedback, or negotiation (Pälli & Kuismin, 2021). Meetings are held in one way traffic. However, in consultation, the powerless are being appointed to the advisory boards, invited to attend meetings and requested to share opinions. Principally, this does not guarantee that their participation or their opinions will be appreciated. In placation, the powerless, are granted some power to influence the planning process, however, the institutions or administrators still hold a genuine power which dictates how the process should proceed. The three: informing, consultation and placation constitute the tokenism kind of power. The rest three rungs are partnership, delegated power and citizen control. At the partnership rung (Varwell, 2022), the powerless guard their interests and through protests and campaigns manage to gain their fair share in the planning process through a win-win negotiation with the institutions, officials and administrators. At the delegated power rung, the powerless are empowered to have control, and managerial capacity on planning processes and to resolve any conflict available, the traditional powerholders bargain for their fair share. Citizen control rung is at the apex, here the community has full power to control and manage the institution. The community overseas planning for its welfare. The top three rungs (partnership, delegated power and citizen in control) constitute a degree of real power to the people.

Theories of participation

Social Exchange Theory (SET) starts from the position that individuals exchange ideas base on social related resources, and thus create organizational and network levels (Das and Teng, 2002). SET has four main components: (1) the exchanges and organized networks rely on and exhibit reinforcement tools; (2) the mechanisms of exchange rely on perceived cost which any exchange may have or may derive; (3) the exchanges are visible/observable through detecting and analyzing rewards; (4) social exchange relations are stimulated by social structures, social capital factors, and reciprocity. Participation is also a kind of social exchange.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is another theory which reflects on participation. Barrutia & Echebarria (2019) define social identification as the sense of belongingness or openness. Identification promotes positive attitudes and citizenship behaviors in networks (Barrutia & Echebarria, 2019), and territories (Barrutia & Echebarria, 2019). SIT has three main components which are categorization, identification, and comparison.

Public Goods Theory (PGT) sees participation as a dependent on the benefit for the public. "Public" benefits are enjoyed by all the people and not just a single person (Holcombe, 2000). The rationality of an individual is seen when an individual opted for more benefits which outweigh the incurred benefits. Economists regard some benefits as "public" which are attractive to people yet still people will not participate to win them (Holcombe, 2000). These goods have such properties like "jointness of supply" and "non-excludability" (Holcombe, 2000).

PGT has two main components: jointness in consumption (some scholars call it non-rivalrous) and, non-excludability.

Comparison of theories of participation

Table 1 provides a comparative overview of the 3 theories with regard to drivers and explanations for participation.

Table 1. Comparison of theories on community participation

Theory	Major units of analysis	Major role of cultural values in the logic and rationale of the theory	Major assumptions on the role of social networks	Major assumptions on how participation outcomes are derived	Major components relevant for participation
Social Exchange Theory	▪ Social behavior when making risk / trade-off assessments	▪ Institutionalized practices between actors of different communities when transacting and determine whether a transaction occurs or not	▪ People's individual choices in interpersonal situations are interdependent ▪ The decision outcome for each person is closely dependent on the decisions made by others ▪ People seek to maximize benefits for a community of individuals who hold common interests	▪ Expectations of rewards ▪ Expectations of benefits and resources ▪ Presence of social exchange relations ▪ Presence of behaviors for reciprocity ▪ Presence of a regulating mechanism for reciprocity ▪ Aspirations for a long-term relationship ▪ Development of trust and commitment	▪ Reinforcement tools ▪ Mechanisms of exchange based on subjective cost-reward analysis ▪ Social exchange relations stimulated by social structures and social capital factors ▪ Reciprocity
Social Identity Theory	▪ Sense of group membership,	▪ The basis for a membership to a community	▪ Social and emotional	▪ In-group relationship	▪ Categorization ▪ Identification ▪ Comparison

	biased behavior	and determine if you are considered a part of the community and determine whether a decision or practice is relevant for you or not	attachment to role-based groups. ▪ Embeddedness of role-based others in a person's social circle.	▪ Positive qualities ▪ Self enhancement ▪ Self-verification ▪ Inter groups relations ▪ Mobilization
Public Goods Theory	▪ Assess behavior/ decision making to goods/exclusion/inclusion	▪ Sense of what belongs to or is in the common interest of the community and determines therefore if someone gets access to resource	Networks can lead to specialization. Specialization has welfare benefits.	▪ Who will enjoy the produced good ▪ Number of people in the society ▪ Jointness in consumption/ Nonrivalrous ▪ Nonexcludability

(Source: Field Survey 2025)

B. Methods

To observe and detect the artifacts to assess which theory would best explain the observed difference in participation behavior in the different land use planning projects in Tanzania, we decided to collect behavioral and motivational data in a specific project, Nyanguku Dam Construction. Nyanguku Ward is located in Geita District within the Geita Region of Tanzania (Geita Town Council, 2021). Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through interview and documentary review. Quantitative data simplifies determination of the association of two variables (Sinawarti & Sihombing, 2024). A mixed questionnaire was a tool used to record data during interview. Questionnaire survey provides basic information of the respondents (Tsuchiya et al., 2021). Using questionnaire is comparatively cost-effective, efficient, accessible and helps in reaching diverse population (Kuphanga, 2024, Amirthalingam et al., 2024, Zhang et al., 2024, Taherdoost, 2022, Gulnoza & Niginabonu 2022, and Curle & Derakhshan, 2021). Documentary review is equally efficient, cost effective, provide exactness, and broad coverage (Hinzke et al., 2023, Özkan, 2023, Kosciejew, 2021, and Bowen, 2009). A well-prepared guideline for undertaking the interview before the respondent(s) was used to collect detailed information from TASAF Officers, Ward Executive Officer (WEO), and Village Executive Officer (VEO). A checklist creates a structured and systematic process for undertaking the observation and documentary review (Lee, 2024, Makram et al., 2022, Krom & van den Hoven, 2022, and Kothari, 2004).

Social Exchange Theory is manifested through social behavior when making risk/trade-off assessments. Social Identity Theory is observed through perception of sense of group membership and biased behavior of members. Public Goods Theory is determined through individual's motives leading to a decision of including or excluding himself from public goods. We tested and validated responses in various manners. Indicators of behavior and motivation included how often respondents

had participated in projects, which language they use to express motivation for participation (and non-participation), how they perceived levels of satisfaction and how much they perceived influence of culture when making a decision to participate, the degree to which they expressed how any social network influenced their decision to participate how and how often respondents were active in community meetings, whether there was any record or reference of having participated in physical labor, and the degree to which respondents perceived any influence in decision making processes by their participation.

The interpretation drew on both quantitative (largely descriptive) and qualitative (interpretative, hermeneutic) inference methods aligned with the key tenets and assumptions of theories. We used hereby the observed behavioral artifacts as both dependent variables and the observed and documented contextual artifacts (as formulated by the respective theories) as independent variables.

In this research two independent variables were selected to study factors affecting participation in the Nyanguku Dam construction project. These variables are: (1) cultural values and (2) social networks. The relationship of each of these two variables with the dependent variable "participation" was explored through descriptive statistics. Thematic and content analysis were used to identify key constructions of each theory mentioned above in each of the two selected variables.

C. Result and Discussion

Data were collected from 93 respondents where: 89 respondents were Nyanguku residents, 2 TASAF Officers, 1 Ward Executive Officer, and 1 Village Executive Officer. Out of 93 respondents, 56 (60%) were female and 37 (40) were male. The respondents involved ranged between 17 and 100 years old, though majority were the 31 -50 age group (41.9%). Also, 60.2% of the respondents were females. On education, majority of the respondents (41%) had primary education, followed by respondents with informal education (37%), while 11% had secondary education and 4% had tertiary education.

In this section, contents of Table 2, 3 and 4 include both "percent" and "percent of cases" to give a reader different viewpoint about the data. The inclusion of percent aims at assisting the reader to comprehend spreading inside the category. The inclusion of percent of cases aims at assisting the reader to appreciate spreading of multiple responses inside the category. While total percent of all categories is always 100, the total percent of cases of all categories is not always 100.

1. Culture value that influences the willingness to participate in TASAF III

In this study, the respondents were asked on whether they perceive any relationship between their own cultural values and their willingness to participate in the TASAF III activities. The majority of respondents (86%) indicated their cultural values and heritage influenced their willingness to participate in the TASAF III activities. They see that if the goal of this project is in line with their culture, they, they feel obliged to participate in this project. It is only 10.8% of the respondents who had the opinion that the goal of this project conflicts with their cultural values. However, 3.2% did not mention the goal of the project but believe that some cultural practices might encourage community

participation. Nonetheless, few respondents (1.1%) believe that some cultural practices discourage community participation. Among the respondents, 9.7% believe that there are some cultural norms that prioritize individual participation over community participation. Only a few of them (3.2%) have the opinion that some cultural norms prioritize community participation over individual participation. Table 2 summarizes these results.

Table 2. Cultural values and community participation

Statement	Response		
	Respondents	Percent (n=93)	Percent of case
Belief and tradition align with project goal	73	78.4%	87.0%
Belief and tradition conflict with project goal	9	9.8%	10.9%
Culture practice encourage community participation	8	8.8%	9.8%
Culture practice discourage community participation	3	2.9%	3.3%
	93	100	

(Source: Field Survey 2025)

The majority of the respondents indicate that they see a positive relationship between cultural values and the willingness to participate in the TASAF III activities. They see that the goal of this project is in line with their culture, thus, they are obliged to participate in this project. It is only 10.8% of the respondents who have the opinion that the goal of this project conflicts with their cultural values. 3.2% of the respondents believe that some cultural practices encourage community participation. Based on the social identity theory through thematic and descriptive analysis, the people of Nyanguku have the perception that they belong to one cultural group (which is perhaps *Sukuma* ethnic group). They categorize themselves as one group that shares the same cultural values. This cements their in-group relationships. Categorization is one of the key tenets of the social identity theory in which the positive qualities of their in-group members are amplified. The perception that this project is in line with their culture stimulates them to participate in this project, knowing that the success of this project is their success as well. They simply identify themselves with the success of the project.

In relation to the Social Exchange Theory, most of the respondents who indicated that there is a positive relationship between the cultural values and the willingness to participate in the TASAF III activities, which corresponds with the third components of this theory which argues that social exchange relations are stimulated by embedded and long-term practiced social structures and social capital factors.

2. Social networks and community participation in development projects

On social network and participation, we asked respondents the extent to which their social networks influence their participation in the TASAF III dam construction project. Among the variables that we opted for social networks include: community leaders, and friends and acquaintances. Table 3 provides the overview of the results.

The results of this question show that majority of the respondents (84.6%) agree that their community leaders are promoting participation. At least 11.8% of the respondents give credits to their friends and

Table 3. Social Networks and participation

Statement	Response		
	Respondents	Percent (n=93)	Percent of case
Community leaders promote participation	73	79	86.8%
Community leaders discourage participation	7	8	8.8%
Friend and acquaintance encourage participation	10	11	12.1%
Friend and acquaintance discourage participation	1	1	1.1%
Lack of social support hinder participation	2	1	2 %
	93	100	

(Source: Field Survey 2025)

Most of the respondents agree that their community leaders are promoting participation if they themselves see a positive reason to participate. The respondents give credit to their friends and acquaintances for encouraging them to participate in this project. However, a small group of 8.6%, are of the opinion that their community leaders discourage them from participating in this project. Only a few people in Nyanguku insist that their friends and acquaintances are discouraging them from participating in this project. Based on the Public Goods Theory, though these people did not explain reasons as to why their friends and acquaintances discouraged them from participating in the project, however, since this dam is a public project, these people knew for sure that their act of not participating will not hinder them from accessing and using the dam when it is ready for use. Dam is a public good. Meanwhile, based on the Social Identity Theory, normally, people obey and implement opinions of their leaders when they identify themselves with those leaders. Through thematic and descriptive analysis, it is clear that the majority of the respondents of this study obey and implement opinions proposed by their leaders. They do so because they identify themselves with their leaders. Identification is the second tenet of social identity theory. Through identification, members of the society perform what the other members of the society are performing. The Nyanguku people are participating (though at low levels of participation) in the Nyanguku dam construction project because they identify themselves with their leaders who are supporting this project. The Nyanguku people are also participating in the Nyanguku dam construction project as a way of emulating what their friends and acquaintances are doing in the project. By doing so, they feel that they belong to the same group with their friends and acquaintances. This act constitutes identification which is the second tenet of the social identity theory. A small group of the respondents claim that their community leaders discourage them from participating in this project. Though they did not mention how this occurred it is doubtful that these few people are in good terms with their community leader or whether they can

identify themselves with their leaders. Being not in good terms with his/her leader puts one in a position of not obeying or implementing what their leader is telling him or her to do. This is because people do not identify themselves with the leaders they dislike. Even the very few who insist that their friends and acquaintances are discouraging them from participating in this project also constitutes identification, the second tenet of the social identity theory. This is because people normally, take and implement opinions of the people they identify with. The negative perception of these few towards the project is the result of the negative perception of their friends and acquaintances towards this project. People in the same group do as what other people in that group do since they identify each other.

Also, basing on the Social Exchange Theory, the role of community leaders, and friends and acquaintance on enhancing participation in the Nyanguku Dam Construction project is explained through all the tenets of this theory which are; reinforcement tools, mechanisms of exchange based on subjective cost–reward analysis, social exchange relations stimulated by social structures and social capital factors, and reciprocity. As per the Social Exchange Theory, the people of Nyanguku are implementing opinions of their leaders, friends and acquaintances to participate in the Nyanguku Dam Construction project hoping to get rewarded by such things such as status, money, love, information, services and goods. As per the Social Exchange Theory, the good relationships existing between the Nyanguku people and their leaders, friends and acquaintances are enhanced by the hope for benefits and resources as well as the existence of the social exchange relations which include norms, rules, informational channels, expectations and obligations. The people of Nyanguku are obedient to their leaders to the point of participating to the Nyanguku Dam Construction project hoping that their leaders will also reciprocate through various rewards as mentioned above. This reciprocation process is facilitated by the existing mechanisms which facilitate and regulate reciprocity. Obedient of the Nyanguku people to their leaders as per the Social Exchange Theory is possible because of the presence of mutual commitment between the Nyanguku Community leaders and the people of Nyanguku, development of trust between them and loyalty between them.

3. Participation challenges in TASAF III Dam Construction Project

The study further aimed to unveil what is hindering the community members from fully participating in this TASAF III Dam Construction Project. The distance from the project site to where community members reside was mentioned by 43% of the respondents. This constraint is related to constraint number two, which is inadequate transport facilities covering the project site and the dwellings. The inadequacy of transport facilities was mentioned by 18.3% of all the respondents. Similar is the 15.1% of the respondents whose participation is constrained by the inadequacy of the project related information. Since the project is implemented by experts who do not speak the local language “*Sukuma*”, 3.3% of the respondents have mentioned language barrier as what constrained their full participation in this project. Infrastructures in general were mentioned by 14% as their constraint and availability of time was mentioned by 5.4% of all the respondents as their constraint. Table 4 summarizes these findings.

Table 4. Participation challenges in TASAF III Dam Construction Project

Statement	Response		
	Respondents	Percent (n=93)	Percent of case
Distance to project site	41	43.5%	51.3%
Lack of transportation facilities	17	18.5%	21.8%
Availability of project related information	14	15.2%	17.9%
Language barriers	3	3.3%	3.85
Physical barriers (example) infrastructure limitation, health issues, and age)	13	14.1%	16.7%
Time constrains	5	5.4%	6.4%
TOTAL	93	100.0%	

(Source: Field Survey 2025)

As it has been mentioned earlier in Public Goods Theory a possible reason to determine this could be Jointness in consumption/Nonrivalrous, or Non-excludability. Under normal circumstances, a person participates to get a product with excludability properties (private good). To obtain a private good, a person will incur all the costs related to distance, overcome the challenges related to inadequate transport facilities, will do the best to cover the gap of the inadequacy of the project related information, infrastructures in general (and time) and will work diligently to overcome the language barrier. However, since the Nyanguku Dam is a public good, some people will find all excuses not to deal with the challenges related to distance, inadequate transport facilities, inadequacy of the project related information, language barrier, infrastructures in general and unavailability of time to participate in the Nyanguku Dam Construction project. These people who are backing off from participating in the Nyanguku Dam Construction project have the perception that others will pay (will participate) to make the Nyanguku Dam Construction project successful. As it is the case in Public Goods Theory, these non-participants believe that since, Nyanguku Dam is a public good, then when it is ready for use, they (non-participants) will also have access to it and will use it anyhow.

Since the project is implemented by experts who do not speak the local language "Sukuma", 3.3% of the respondents have mentioned language barriers as what constrained their fully participation in this project. The Sukuma people of Nyanguku do not consider the project experts as being the people who belong to the same group with them. The Sukuma people of Nyanguku do not identify themselves with the project experts. They do not share their language with the language of the experts. Based on the Social Identity Theory, in the situation where one feels not belonging to the same group as the other, he/she cannot do what others are doing since they do not share common values.

4. Levels of Community Participation in TASAF III Dam Construction Project

Informing level

On the levels of participation, our study reveals that majority of the respondents (74.2%) are frequently attending community meetings where progress of this project is one of the items. Other community members (22.6%) rarely attend the community meetings and only 3.2% has never

attended any community meeting. It is during these community meetings, where the majority of the sample reveal to attend frequently, project information is shared.

Placation level

In this study, we found out that 71% of the respondents are participating in this project through performing the activities in some arranged manners, while 23.7% are participating in project activities as volunteers. It is only 5.4% of all the respondents which has never provided their labor power to this project. Through these various ways the respondents are participating in the implementation of this project.

Consultation level

Our study reveals also that, 72.1% of all the respondents are frequently providing their ideas and suggestions to the project implementation team, there are also 22.6% of the respondents who rarely providing ideas and suggestions to the project team. It is only 5.3% of the respondents which have never provided any idea and suggestion to the project team. Table 5 provides more details.

Table 5. Basic Levels of Community Involvement in TASAF III Dam Construction Project

Statement	Never	Rarely	Frequently
Informing, attending community meetings	3.2%	22.6%	74.2%
Placation, physical labor and volunteer activities	5.3%	23.7%	71%
Consultation, provide ideas and suggestions	5.3%	22.6%	72.1%

(Source: Field Survey 2025)

Most of the respondents are frequently attending community meetings where progress of this project is one of the items on the meetings' agenda. Other community members rarely attend the community meetings and only few have never attended any community meeting. Project information are shared in these meetings. Indeed, the participation process in the Nyanguku Dam Construction project consists of only placation and consultation levels i.e., lower levels which do not culminate into empowerment or citizen control on planning for their affairs.

D. Conclusion

The findings of this study on factors affecting community participation in Nyanguku Ward Dam Construction Project in Geita, Tanzania seem to correspond to specific parts of all three theories. However, Public Goods Theory, and Social Exchange Theory perhaps are more pronounced in the findings, as respondents perceive a positive relationship between the cultural values and the willingness of Nyanguku people to participate in the Nyanguku Dam Construction Project activities and also perceive that the structure and process of participation are very much rooted in previously internally established social structures and perceived benefits of internally shared knowledge and mutual reciprocal relations. These tend to shape daily processes of accepting and following a decision of another member of the community because past experiences to do so have led to mutual benefits.

This behavior also clarifies why the role of community leaders is also crucial when trying to achieve participatory processes. When a community leader has established an historical and contingent trust level, the choice of this leader to participate reinforces others to participate. Given the observed findings that the people of Nyanguku are implementing opinions of their leaders, friends and acquaintances to participate in the project since they are essentially hoping and expecting to be rewarded through reciprocal status, money, love, information, services and goods when they follow their leader. The people of Nyanguku are obedient to participate in the project hoping that their leaders will also reciprocate through various rewards. This is supported by the existing mechanisms which facilitate and regulate reciprocation. Obedience of the Nyanguku people to their leaders is possible because of the presence of mutual commitment between them and their leaders. In contrast, the findings through public goods theory would follow a less plausible argument. Here one would argue that the Nyanguku people would participate in the construction activities of this project when they realize (rationally) that they would be avoiding incurring some costs related to their participation in this project. This would assume having the ability to estimate costs related to distance, inadequate transport facilities, inadequacy of the project related information, infrastructures in general (and time), and the language barrier. The rational argument to participate would in this case be that their participation would be avoiding such costs for the community because Nyanguku Dam is collectively perceived as a public good, and when it is ready for use, even these non-participants will also have access to utilize it anyhow. One could however question whether such a rational trade-off assessment is in effect a reasonable explanation for the observed findings. The research question and data structure of this study limited application of more quantitative models of analysis which we think would have been more useful for this study. On policy perspective, we recommend that, the Tanzanian government should integrate empowerment leading to citizens' ability to control projects in their localities as a compulsory component of development projects' appraisal process.

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