

Community Involvement and ITS Impact On School Success In Madagascar

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how community involvement influences school success in Sakaraha, a semi-urban district in the Atsimo-Andrefana region of Madagascar, where educational progress is often hindered by limited resources and social inequality. It sought to understand how local actors participate in school activities, the barriers they encounter, and the effects of their engagement on educational outcomes. A qualitative approach was employed, using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis to collect data from 25 participants, including school principals, teachers, parents, community leaders, and education officers selected through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was applied to identify key patterns and perspectives regarding community participation and its impact on school performance. The findings indicate that communities in Sakaraha contribute actively through practical actions such as maintaining school facilities, organizing local initiatives, and supporting student discipline; however, their participation remains limited in decision-making and long-term educational planning. Socioeconomic constraints, particularly poverty, low literacy levels, and weak communication between schools and families, continue to limit sustained collaboration. Despite these challenges, community participation was found to enhance student motivation, attendance, and the overall school environment, demonstrating its significance as a key driver of educational improvement. Strengthening participatory mechanisms and equipping communities with leadership and communication skills could transform this involvement into a more strategic and sustainable force for school development. The study highlights the need for stronger collaboration among the Ministry of National Education, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote inclusive governance and shared responsibility in education. Enhancing community-school partnerships in Sakaraha and similar regions may contribute to a more equitable, resilient, and effective education system that supports long-term student success and community development.

Keywords: community, involvement, school, success

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in driving social and economic transformation, particularly in developing countries where disparities in access and quality remain pervasive. In Madagascar, despite several policy reforms, the education system continues to face persistent challenges, including low academic achievement, high dropout rates, and weak collaboration between schools and communities (Emynorane et al., 2025). These problems are compounded by socioeconomic inequalities and limited educational infrastructure, especially in rural areas where access to quality schooling remains constrained (Ratna et al., 2025). The government has promoted decentralization as a means to strengthen local participation; however, the results have been inconsistent, often hindered by weak institutional capacity and fragmented implementation (Emynorane et al., 2025). In such contexts, community involvement is not only a support mechanism but a key driver for school effectiveness, accountability, and sustainability (Lee & Hung, 2024). Across the world, research increasingly emphasizes the positive link between community participation and school success. When communities participate meaningfully in school planning, management, and evaluation, the learning environment becomes more supportive, and students develop a stronger connection

to their schools (Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016; Yamada, 2014; Kumar et al., 2024). However, the extent and quality of community involvement are largely shaped by local governance structures, communication mechanisms, and socio-demographic characteristics (Berhanu & Naidoo, 2024). In Madagascar, many communities, especially in remote regions, remain marginalized from decision-making processes, and schools often struggle to build consistent and meaningful partnerships with parents and local stakeholders (Eric et al., 2025). Strengthening these relationships is critical not only for improving academic outcomes but also for reinforcing social cohesion and collective responsibility toward education.

Evidence from other developing contexts shows that schools achieve better results when community members are empowered to participate beyond symbolic representation. Corduban et al. (2014) demonstrated that volunteerism and local projects can enhance social responsibility and collective learning, and Trani et al. (2025) found that participatory school interventions improved learning outcomes and reduced social exclusion. Similarly, Kobayashi and Ogawa (2025) reported that community participation in Ugandan schools contributed to improved management practices and student performance. These studies underscore that active community engagement strengthens school systems, especially when supported by transparent communication and a shared vision for educational improvement (Berhanu & Naidoo, 2024; Owan, 2019; Esuman, 2019).

Community involvement is widely acknowledged as essential to educational quality; however, its role within Madagascar's sociocultural and political setting remains insufficiently explored. Previous studies in the country have focused more on issues such as governance, administrative capacity, and teacher-student relationships (Emynorane et al., 2024; Eric et al., 2025). Few studies have explored how community participation affects school outcomes or how local actors interpret their roles in the education system. Efforts to empower communities through decentralization have been hindered by the absence of well-defined frameworks and long-term institutional support. Communication barriers between schools and communities, driven by language diversity, limited literacy, and differing expectations, further restrict meaningful engagement (Berhanu & Naidoo, 2024; Owan, 2019; Esuman, 2019). As a result, many schools operate in isolation, depriving themselves of potential community resources and collaboration that could foster educational success.

Community involvement is a multidimensional concept that extends beyond occasional parent meetings or resource contributions. It includes participation in decision-making, monitoring student performance, managing school resources, and supporting extracurricular activities. Studies have shown that active community engagement not only improves academic performance but also enhances student motivation, discipline, and well-being (Domitrovich et al., 2025; Gray et al., 2025; Turnquest et al., 2024). In low-resource environments like Madagascar, the role of community collaboration becomes even more significant. Schools with limited governmental support often rely on community contributions for infrastructure maintenance, learning materials, and safety initiatives (Oktari et al., 2025; Kumar et al., 2024; Corduban et al., 2014). A strong sense of ownership among community members over the educational process makes schools more resilient and better able to adapt to local challenges.

Meaningful participation requires both capacity and awareness. Berhanu and Naidoo (2024) found that in Ethiopia, higher education levels and stronger communication between schools and communities led to more effective involvement in curriculum implementation. Bashir et al. (2021) also noted that students viewed community participation as essential to school improvement, yet it was often constrained by limited awareness and socioeconomic challenges. These findings reflect the situation in Madagascar, where poverty, illiteracy, and geographic isolation continue to hinder consistent collaboration. Nevertheless, emerging innovations in communication and digital technology show promise for bridging these gaps by promoting more accessible and transparent engagement between schools and communities (Eric et al., 2025; Sadat et al., 2025).

Strong school-community relationships also have social and emotional benefits. Schools that integrate community participation tend to cultivate trust, empathy, and mutual accountability among teachers,

parents, and students (Tadle-Zaragosa & Sonsona, 2021). Such collaboration promotes a sense of shared mission, where education is viewed not as the responsibility of teachers alone but as a communal endeavor. This collective approach also enhances school resilience during crises. For example, Gray et al. (2025) observed that schools with active community partnerships were more capable of maintaining student engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, participatory management helps address structural inequities by amplifying marginalized voices in educational decision-making (Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016; Yamada, 2014; Edwards et al., 2020).

Madagascar's socio-political landscape adds further complexity to these dynamics. The decentralization process intends to empower local education offices, yet disparities in resource allocation and institutional weaknesses limit their impact (Emynorane et al., 2025). In many regions, communities lack the organizational structures and leadership capacity to engage effectively with schools. International evidence indicates that strengthening local partnerships contributes to improved accountability and greater educational equity (Trani et al., 2025; Kobayashi & Ogawa, 2025; Kumar et al., 2024). Schools that effectively incorporate community perspectives tend to exhibit higher levels of commitment, trust, and collaboration, which are essential for sustaining student achievement and institutional growth.

Within this context, community involvement in Madagascar can be seen as both a strategy for enhancing educational outcomes and a reflection of broader social transformation. By examining how communities interact with schools, this study seeks to illuminate the dynamics shaping educational success and the social factors that sustain it. Education is not simply a classroom process but it is embedded in social relationships, cultural values, and community practices (Ratna et al., 2025). Thus, understanding community involvement provides valuable insight into how collective action, communication, and local agency contribute to sustainable school development.

The study positions community participation as a catalyst for redefining school success in resource-constrained environments. As Corduban et al. (2014) and Edwards et al. (2020) suggest, community-driven initiatives have the potential to transform schools into hubs of empowerment and shared learning. In the Malagasy context, where schools often operate with minimal state support, such engagement may serve as the bridge between policy and practice. Examining how these partnerships evolve provides both practical implications for improving education in Madagascar and theoretical insights into how collective responsibility and local engagement can drive meaningful educational reform in developing societies.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore how community involvement influences school success in the Malagasy context, emphasizing the perspectives and lived experiences of local stakeholders. The study was conducted in Sakaraha, Atsimo Andrefana region, a semi-urban district in Madagascar known for its diverse educational landscape, where both government and community-managed schools coexist. The choice of Sakaraha was based on its representativeness of many Malagasy communities that experience socio-economic diversity and varying degrees of community participation in education. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The participants included school principals, teachers, parents, community leaders, and education officers, all selected through purposive sampling to ensure that those directly involved in school governance and local educational activities were represented. In total, 25 informants participated: five school principals, ten teachers, five parent association members, and five local education authorities. The interviews focused on participants' perceptions of community engagement, barriers to participation, and the perceived impact of local involvement on school performance and student outcomes. Focus group discussions with parents and community representatives allowed for deeper insights into shared experiences and collective attitudes toward school governance. All interviews were conducted in Malagasy and later translated into English, ensuring meaning retention through back-translation. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework such as familiarization, coding, theme

development, reviewing, defining, and reporting to identify recurring patterns and interpret their significance. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing insights from interviews, focus groups, and school documents such as meeting minutes and community action plans. Member checking was also conducted, allowing participants to review and validate key interpretations of their statements. The researcher practiced reflexivity throughout the study by documenting analytical reflections and remaining aware of potential biases that might affect data interpretation. Ethical considerations were strictly observed: participants gave informed consent, confidentiality was maintained through anonymized reporting, and participation was entirely voluntary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the study conducted in Sakaraha, Atsimo-Andrefana region revealed that community involvement plays a vital and multidimensional role in shaping school success. Analysis of interviews and focus group discussions highlighted three major themes: (1) the forms and extent of community participation, (2) barriers to meaningful engagement, and (3) the perceived impact of community involvement on school performance and student outcomes. Participants consistently emphasized that the community's engagement in education was primarily visible in areas such as school maintenance, fundraising, and student discipline, rather than in academic planning or curriculum-related decision-making. Teachers and principals reported that parents often contributed labor and local materials for classroom repairs and participated in organizing cultural and sports events. However, this participation was largely occasional and activity-based, rather than continuous and strategic. School leaders acknowledged the community's willingness to support education but observed that involvement tends to decline after immediate needs are met. This finding suggests that the community recognizes its role in supporting education, but participation remains focused on practical contributions rather than ongoing collaboration in educational governance.

The second major theme concerns the barriers to effective community participation. Informants identified several interrelated challenges, including poverty, low literacy levels, time constraints, and weak communication between schools and families. Many parents in Sakaraha rely on subsistence farming and fishing, which limits their availability to attend meetings or participate in school management activities. Teachers also explained that some community members perceive education as the sole responsibility of the government, resulting in limited initiative from parents. Cultural hierarchies further complicate dialogue between educators and families, as some parents feel intimidated or undervalued in discussions with school staff. Local education officials admitted that decentralized encourage policies participatory management; however, schools often lack clear structures or guidance to ensure meaningful collaboration. Records from school committee meetings confirmed these insights, showing that attendance was often low and discussions were dominated by school officials. Collectively, these findings indicate that socioeconomic conditions, communication gaps, and limited empowerment of local actors continue to restrict active and equitable participation, reducing the potential for communities to influence educational improvement.

The final theme focused on the impact of community involvement on school success. Despite the challenges, participants consistently agreed that even modest levels of engagement have positive effects on school functioning. Teachers and principals observed that when parents and local leaders contributed resources or assisted in monitoring school activities, student attendance and behavior tended to improve. Members of parent associations explained that community-led initiatives, such as organizing school feeding programs and maintaining classrooms, helped boost students' motivation and fostered a stronger sense of belonging. Discussions also revealed that visible community support fostered trust between schools and families, helping teachers feel more valued and accountable. Schools that maintained open communication channels and encouraged shared decision-making reported more consistent collaboration and lower dropout rates. These outcomes demonstrate that effective community participation strengthens school management, promotes social cohesion, and contributes to a more supportive learning environment.

Discussion

Community Participation as a Practical yet Limited Form of Engagement

The findings of this study indicate that community participation in Sakaraha, Atsimo-Andrefana, is predominantly practical in nature, focusing on tangible support such as school maintenance, classroom repair, and assisting in student discipline. This form of engagement demonstrates that the community recognizes its shared responsibility in supporting education; however, participation remains mostly task-oriented and lacks sustained involvement in school governance or academic decision-making. Teachers and principals recognized that while such contributions improve the school's physical environment, they do not necessarily translate into long-term educational improvement or deeper collaboration between schools and communities. This limited participation reflects a broader pattern found in other developing contexts, where communities tend to contribute to short-term needs rather than strategic planning (Lee & Hung, 2024).

This practical orientation toward community participation may be attributed to the historical and cultural context of educational management in Madagascar. In many rural settings, education is still viewed as the responsibility of the state, and communities are involved primarily when a visible or immediate issue arises, such as infrastructure repairs or school events. Similar observations were made by Kobayashi and Ogawa (2025) in Uganda and Taniguchi and Hirakawa (2016) in Malawi, where parental participation was found to be strongest in maintenance and social activities but weakest in academic decision-making. This reflects not a lack of willingness, but rather a lack of empowerment and structural inclusion in educational governance. Community members often express their support through the resources they can easily mobilize labor, materials, and voluntary services demonstrating strong commitment despite limited means.

Nevertheless, this type of engagement holds significant symbolic value. Practical contributions such as classroom improvements and collective initiatives serve as visible expressions of solidarity and shared responsibility. They strengthen social ties between teachers, parents, and students, reinforcing the idea that education is a communal investment. However, for such efforts to become transformative, communities need to be actively involved in decision-making and planning processes, not just in implementation. As Corduban et al. (2014) emphasize, community participation should extend beyond volunteerism to include spaces for dialogue, reflection, and shared governance. In the context of Sakaraha, this shift would require schools and local authorities to establish clearer mechanisms that invite community voices into educational decisions, ensuring that participation contributes not only to school improvement but also to the long-term improvement of teaching and learning.

Developing this broader form of engagement demands capacity-building efforts, both for educators and community members. Schools can encourage deeper involvement through training, transparent communication, and participatory forums that allow stakeholders to discuss school development plans collectively. By moving from reactive involvement to proactive collaboration, communities can help shape the direction of education in ways that align with local needs and values. This transformation from practical to strategic participation represents a critical step toward sustainable educational success in rural Madagascar.

Socioeconomic and Structural Barriers to Effective Collaboration

A major theme emerging from this study concerns the socioeconomic and institutional barriers that hinder effective community participation in education. Participants consistently identified poverty, limited literacy, and restricted access to information as the most pressing challenges. In Sakaraha, many parents work in agriculture and fishing, with irregular incomes and long working hours, which limits their availability to engage in school activities. Teachers reported that some parents lack confidence to contribute ideas during meetings, often because they feel their educational background does not equip them to discuss academic issues. This aligns with the findings of Essuman (2019) and Edwards et al. (2020), who noted that social hierarchies and educational inequalities often silence community voices in school governance, resulting in one-sided decision-making processes dominated by educators or administrators.

Another structural constraint lies in the absence of formalized channels for collaboration between schools and communities. In Madagascar, decentralizedization aims to encourage participatory management; however, education officials in Sakaraha noted that many schools do not have well-defined engagement policies, and their committees often function without adequate guidance or training. This finding resonates with Berhanu and Naidoo (2024), who reported that policies designed to promote community participation are frequently undermined by gaps in capacity-building and ineffective communication mechanisms. As a result, parents and local leaders often do not know how to participate meaningfully or perceive their role as limited to financial or manual support. In practice, this creates a dependency dynamic, where communities wait for school authorities to initiate engagement rather than taking an active leadership role.

The study also reveals the influence of cultural and linguistic barriers on participation. Some parents expressed discomfort speaking in formal meetings, particularly when teachers or local officials led the discussions in official or technical language. This power imbalance creates psychological distance between schools and the communities they serve, discouraging open dialogue and shared decision-making. Owan (2019) emphasizes that effective school-community relationships depend on mutual respect, trust, and inclusivity; elements that are often undermined by hierarchical communication patterns. Addressing this requires a shift toward horizontal communication, where teachers and parents view each other as partners rather than as authority figures and subordinates.

Overcoming these barriers requires targeted interventions focused on community empowerment and inclusive leadership. Capacity-building workshops for school committee members, simplified communication tools, and flexible meeting schedules could make participation more accessible to working parents. Furthermore, the integration of local languages and culturally sensitive facilitation methods could help bridge the communication gap. By reducing social and structural inequalities, schools in Sakaraha can transform passive attendance into active, informed, and collaborative engagement which is an essential foundation for sustainable school improvement.

Impact of Community Involvement on School Climate and Student Success

Findings indicate that community involvement, although often constrained, plays a constructive role in enhancing school performance and student well-being. Teachers and principals emphasize that parental involvement in providing resources and monitoring students correlates with better attendance and improved classroom behavior. Parents who took part in classroom maintenance or feeding programs reported that their children showed greater enthusiasm for school and developed a sense of pride in belonging to a supportive learning community. These findings echo the conclusions of Domitrovich et al. (2025) and Gray et al. (2025), who highlight that supportive social environments contribute significantly to students' motivation and emotional resilience.

The social capital generated through community participation appears to play a central role in shaping school culture. Active collaboration fosters trust and accountability among teachers, students, and parents, creating a network of mutual support that enhances the learning environment. In Sakaraha, schools with more consistent community engagement demonstrated higher levels of cooperation between staff and parents, leading to improved communication and collective problem-solving. This mirrors findings from Edwards et al. (2020) and Corduban et al. (2014), who argue that participatory partnerships enhance school effectiveness by aligning institutional goals with community expectations. When communities perceive schools as shared spaces rather than government institutions, their investment in educational outcomes becomes deeper and more sustainable.

Moreover, community participation strengthens not only student achievement but also teacher morale and institutional stability. Teachers in Sakaraha reported feeling more valued and supported when community members acknowledged their work and contributed to improving school conditions. In contexts where schools often operate with limited resources, such as social recognition plays a vital role in maintaining teacher motivation. This aligns with Owan's (2019) argument that school-community partnerships enhance

organizational commitment and reduce teacher turnover by creating a shared sense of purpose. In addition, visible community engagement often translates into better student retention, as parents and children alike develop a sense of collective responsibility for the school's success.

In the broader context of educational development, these outcomes suggest that community involvement should be viewed not merely as a supplementary, but as a central pillar of school improvement. Policies and designed programs to strengthen education in rural Madagascar should therefore prioritize mechanisms that encourage continuous community engagement through transparent communication, shared decision-making, and collaborative goal-setting. By doing so, the benefits of participation can extend beyond immediate problem-solving to foster a lasting culture of inclusion, accountability, and educational excellence.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This study explored how community involvement contributes to school success in Sakaraha, Atsimo-Andrefana region in Madagascar, focusing on the role of local actors in shaping educational outcomes. The findings show that communities in Sakaraha take an active role through practical efforts such as maintaining school facilities and supporting student discipline; however, their involvement remains limited in decision-making and long-term educational planning. Structural and economic constraints, particularly poverty, low literacy, and weak communication between schools and families, continue to limit meaningful collaboration. Despite these challenges, community participation demonstrates a clear positive impact on student motivation, attendance, and the overall learning environment, highlighting its potential as a crucial element in improving school performance. To strengthen this impact, the Ministry of Education, local education authorities, and school management committees should enhance participatory structures that promote shared governance and equip communities with leadership and communication skills. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are encouraged to support initiatives that build community capacity and foster inclusive school-community partnerships. Furthermore, future research should expand to other regions and include comparative analyzes between rural and urban areas to deepen understanding of how community engagement can drive sustainable educational progress in Madagascar.

Credit authorship contribution statement

First Author: Writing original draft, Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, and Observation. Second Author: Methodology, Resources, Project administration. Third Author: Resources, Data curation, Validation. Fourth Author: Visualization, Investigation. Fifth Author: Formal analysis, Supervision, Data curation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Ethical Declaration

All participants provided informed consent prior to their involvement in the study. They were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

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