



# Contribution of Children Participation in the Decision Making Processes on Academic Performance. A Case of Twelve (12) Years Basic Education in Gakenke District, Rwanda

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines the contribution of children's participation in decision-making processes on academic performance in the context of Twelve (12) Years Basic Education in Gakenke District, Rwanda. The study focuses on evaluating how children's participation in decision-making within schools contribute to their academic outcomes. Guided by social cognitive and self-determination theories, the research adopted a descriptive design using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The target population included 481 participants students, teachers, parents, and educational authorities from 13 schools. A sample of 218 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling and Yamane's formula at a 5% significance level. Data collection employed structured questionnaires, and analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 25. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to interpret the data. Findings revealed a significant positive correlation between children's participation in school decision-making and academic performance, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.692$ . Regression analysis further indicated that child participation significantly predicts academic outcomes, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.215 and a  $p$ -value of 0.006. The study concludes that engaging students in decision-making enhances their academic achievement. It recommends that schools cultivate a participatory culture by creating platforms for student input and training teachers to effectively integrate student feedback into teaching and school governance. These measures are essential for fostering a supportive learning environment and improving educational outcomes.*

**Keywords:** Children Participation, Decision Making Processes, Academic Performance, Twelve (12) Years Basic Education and Gakenke District

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## 1. Introduction

The inclusion of children in decision-making processes regarding their academic performance has become a cornerstone of progressive educational reform worldwide. Moving beyond traditional top-down models, there is a growing emphasis on participatory approaches that

recognize students as active agents in their learning journey. Smith et al. (2019) demonstrated the transformative potential of student participation in shaping educational experiences, reporting improvements in both school climate and academic achievement. Similarly, UNESCO (2020) highlighted that schools with established mechanisms for student engagement tend to report higher

retention rates and improved learning outcomes. However, despite mounting evidence of its benefits, global implementation remains uneven, often challenged by cultural norms, institutional inertia, and systemic barriers that restrict meaningful student involvement.

In developed countries, efforts to include students in academic decision-making are more advanced, supported by robust infrastructure, policies, and technological tools. In nations such as Australia, student-led initiatives have flourished, contributing to enhanced school culture and student well-being (Garcia & Nguyen, 2022). Digital platforms in these regions offer widespread opportunities for students to voice opinions and influence educational practices, helping cultivate a culture of agency and accountability. Jones and Brown (2021) found that students who are actively involved in school decisions display higher levels of engagement and academic commitment. Nevertheless, challenges remain in ensuring that such participatory models are consistently and equitably implemented across all socio-economic and demographic groups.

Across Africa, the importance of student participation in educational decision-making is gaining recognition, though implementation is still in its infancy. Adeyemi and Osokoya (2018) called for increased inclusion of children's voices in education policy development across the continent. Despite this, UNESCO (2020) reported that a significant number of African schools continue to operate under hierarchical, adult-centric models that stifle student agency. Ngware et al. (2019) pointed to cultural norms and traditional power dynamics as major barriers, where societal expectations often limit children's ability to engage in decision-making. Moreover, while digital tools hold promise for amplifying student voices, the African Union (2020) noted that disparities in internet access, especially in rural areas, pose significant challenges to leveraging technology for inclusive participation.

Within the East African Community (EAC), children's participation in educational decision-making is increasingly seen as critical, yet practical frameworks for implementation remain scarce. Ndaruhutse (2019) emphasized the need for greater student involvement across EAC member states, but statistics from the EAC Secretariat (2020) revealed that only a minority of schools have institutionalized such practices. Cultural factors further complicate efforts, as noted by Rugambwa et al. (2021), with some communities maintaining hierarchical traditions that restrict children from expressing their views. The potential of technology in promoting participation is acknowledged by Mushi and Kiwara (2022), yet access disparities particularly in marginalized and rural communities continue to limit its impact. Bridging these

gaps is vital for fostering meaningful and equitable student engagement across the region.

In Rwanda, especially within rural districts like Gakenke, promoting children's involvement in academic decision-making is a growing educational priority. Nationally, efforts are guided by policies such as the Rwandan Education Sector Policy (2018), which advocates for inclusive and participatory learning environments. Rwabukwisi and Uwamariya (2019) emphasized the importance of integrating student voices in shaping educational frameworks, but localized data from areas like Gakenke remains limited. The Rwandan Ministry of Education (2020) reported that many schools still lack concrete mechanisms for student engagement, particularly in rural settings. Kagabo and Muteteli (2021) highlighted ongoing challenges, including disparities in infrastructure and limited access to technology. Addressing these issues is essential to ensuring that all Rwandan children, regardless of geographic or socio-economic background, can actively contribute to their educational experiences.

## 1.1 Problem statement

The inclusion of children in decision-making processes regarding their academic performance is increasingly recognized as a vital component of modern educational reform. According to a UNESCO (2020) report, schools that have established mechanisms for student involvement tend to experience higher student retention rates and improved academic outcomes. Despite this, the integration of children's perspectives into educational decision-making remains limited, particularly across Africa. Cultural norms, entrenched bureaucratic systems, and hierarchical power structures often hinder meaningful student engagement. As a result, many schools continue to rely on top-down approaches that marginalize students' voices and diminish their sense of ownership over their education.

In Rwanda, this issue persists, with significant implications for educational progress. Statistics from the Rwandan Ministry of Education (2020) reveal that mechanisms for student engagement are minimally implemented, particularly in rural districts such as Gakenke. Here, educational policies and classroom practices frequently fail to reflect the needs and preferences of students, leading to a disconnect between curriculum content and the lived realities of learners. For students enrolled in the 12 Years Basic Education (12YBE) program, this disconnect manifests as low motivation and decreased engagement. Many students perceive education as a passive process controlled by adults, rather than a participatory journey they can influence, which diminishes their investment in academic success and affects their overall well-being.

Despite growing global and national recognition of the importance of student agency, there remains a notable research gap concerning the specific impact of children's participation in decision-making on academic performance in Rwanda, particularly within Gakenke District. Few studies have investigated how the inclusion of students' voices could positively influence academic outcomes and improve school climate at the district level. This lack of localized research limits the ability of policymakers and educators to design context-specific strategies that promote meaningful student engagement. Therefore, this study aims to assess how the inclusion of children in decision-making processes can enhance academic performance in Rwanda, addressing a critical gap in the current educational discourse and practice.

This study sought to achieve the following Research Objective:

- i. To analyze the relationship between the level of children's participation in decision-making processes and academic performance outcomes in Gakenke, Rwanda.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

This section explores the key concepts that frame the study, particularly the inclusion of children in decision-making and its influence on academic performance. The review draws upon existing literature to deepen the understanding of children's participation, the quality of decision-making processes, communication channels, and academic performance. These interconnected concepts form the foundation for analyzing how student engagement can influence educational outcomes, especially within the context of Rwanda.

#### **2.1.1 Children's Participation**

Children's participation in educational decision-making reflects a shift from traditional models of education to more inclusive, learner-centered approaches. Edward. (2019) emphasize that children should be seen as active contributors to their learning environments, rather than passive recipients of information. By empowering students to voice their opinions and shape their educational experiences, schools can create more responsive and effective learning environments. Rwabukwisi and Uwamariya (2019) echo this view in the Rwandan context, urging for local-level structures that facilitate student engagement. They argue that contextualizing participation is essential for ensuring that children's voices are not only heard but acted upon meaningfully.

Cultural perspectives significantly impact the extent of children's participation, particularly in African settings. Sammy (2019) note that in many African societies, traditional hierarchies and respect for authority figures may discourage students from expressing themselves freely. Adeyemi and Osokoya (2018) argue for educational systems that are culturally sensitive yet inclusive, calling for reforms that uphold children's rights while acknowledging local contexts. Overall, fostering participation requires a cultural shift in how children's roles are perceived within educational systems, aligning more closely with rights-based approaches that promote agency, inclusion, and respect for student voice.

#### **2.1.2 Quality of Decision Making Processes**

The quality of decision-making in educational institutions significantly affects outcomes, including student achievement and engagement. Jones and Smith (2017) define high-quality decision-making as inclusive, strategic, and transparent emphasizing that diverse stakeholder input and evidence-based practices lead to more effective outcomes. Gupta et al. (2019) build on this idea, suggesting that decisions should align with institutional goals and values, ensuring that choices made at all levels of education contribute to overarching developmental objectives. These perspectives underscore that sound decision-making practices not only improve operations but also foster trust and accountability within schools.

Cognitive and cultural factors also influence decision-making processes. Chen and Wang (2020) examine how individual biases and limited information processing can lead to suboptimal choices, highlighting the need for critical thinking and reflection in educational leadership. Kim and Lee (2021) further stress that organizational culture plays a pivotal role—schools with cultures that encourage collaboration, transparency, and innovation are better equipped to make quality decisions. This body of research suggests that improving the decision-making environment involves addressing both the procedural and human elements of decision-making.

#### **2.1.3 Twelve (12) Years Basic Education**

The Twelve Years Basic Education (12YBE) program in Rwanda was introduced by the government as part of its broader strategy to increase access to quality education and reduce dropout rates among school-aged children. Officially launched in 2012, the program builds on the foundation of the previous Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE), extending free and compulsory education to cover six years of primary and six years of secondary education. This initiative aligns with Rwanda's Vision 2050 and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), which emphasize

inclusive, equitable, and quality education as key drivers of national development (MINEDUC, 2020).

The implementation of 12YBE has significantly expanded educational opportunities, especially in rural areas like Gakenke District, where socio-economic barriers often hinder school attendance and retention. To accommodate the growing number of students, the government invested in infrastructure development, including classroom construction and the provision of school materials. However, while access has improved, challenges remain in maintaining quality, student engagement, and academic performance (World Bank, 2021). These challenges underscore the need to explore innovative strategies, such as increasing children's participation in school-related decisions, to enhance learning outcomes and student well-being.

Moreover, the philosophy behind 12YBE supports holistic education, aiming not only to provide academic instruction but also to empower students as active participants in their own learning journey. According to UNESCO (2019), involving learners in school decision-making processes is essential for developing skills such as critical thinking, communication, and leadership competencies that are increasingly important in modern education systems. As such, the integration of child participation into the 12YBE framework is both timely and necessary for fostering a more responsive and student-centered approach to education in Rwanda.

#### **2.1.4 Academic Performance**

Academic performance is a core indicator of educational success and is shaped by multiple factors. Gael and Johnson (2018) define academic performance in terms of students' mastery of subject content and achievement in assessments such as tests and evaluations. They view performance as a direct reflection of how well students meet curricular objectives, and emphasize that high academic performance is often tied to instructional quality and institutional support. This definition underscores the importance of creating an environment where teaching and learning are aligned with assessment and accountability systems.

From a psychological perspective, Dabb (2021) argue that academic performance results from an interplay between cognitive abilities, motivation, learning strategies, and environmental influences. They stress the roles of self-regulation, engagement, and perceived competence as predictors of academic success. This broader conceptualization acknowledges that academic performance cannot be understood solely through grades but must also consider emotional and social dynamics, such

as how valued and empowered students feel in their learning environments.

## **2.2 Theoretical Review**

This section presents the theoretical conceptualization and operationalization of key ideas and variables central to this investigation. The study explores how children's participation in decision-making processes influences academic performance, using well-established theories that explain behavior, motivation, and environmental influences. Theories discussed include Social Cognitive Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, which together provide a robust framework for understanding the dynamics between student engagement and educational outcomes, particularly in the context of Gakenke District, Rwanda.

### **2.2.1 Social Cognitive Theory**

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Albert Bandura in the 1970s, integrates behavioral and cognitive perspectives to explain how individuals learn from observing others and how they, in turn, influence their environment (Bandura, 1986). The theory challenges the notion of learners as passive recipients and instead highlights the reciprocal interaction between cognitive factors, behavior, and environmental influences. Key constructs include observational learning, self-efficacy, and modeling, all of which explain how people acquire and apply new knowledge and skills through social interactions.

SCT emphasizes that learning is an active process driven by self-reflection and observation. Central to the theory is the idea of self-efficacy, or a person's belief in their ability to perform tasks and achieve goals (Otis, 2023). This belief directly influences motivation, resilience, and academic behavior. Through modeling and feedback, individuals learn not just by doing, but by watching others and anticipating the consequences of actions. In education, SCT explains how students internalize behaviors and attitudes that promote learning, especially when they see the positive outcomes of engagement and participation.

Social Cognitive Theory is particularly relevant to this study, as it underscores the role of student involvement in shaping academic outcomes. When children participate in school decision-making, they observe and reflect on the impact of their contributions, which can increase self-efficacy and motivation (Zula and Gasati, 2020). In Gakenke District, where student voice may often be underrepresented, applying SCT helps explain how engagement in decision-making can foster a greater sense

of responsibility and investment in learning, ultimately enhancing academic performance.

### 2.2.2 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), introduced by Deci and Ryan (1985), emerged as a framework to understand intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being. The theory posits that human behavior is guided by the need to satisfy three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are fulfilled, individuals become more motivated, engaged, and capable of achieving personal and academic goals. SDT shifted the focus from extrinsic motivators (e.g., rewards or punishments) to intrinsic factors that drive sustained motivation and personal development.

SDT explains that individuals are more likely to thrive in environments that support their psychological needs. In educational settings, autonomy refers to students' ability to make choices in their learning; competence is their belief in mastering tasks; and relatedness reflects the sense of belonging among peers and teachers (Ngayani, 2020). When these elements are supported, learners become more engaged and committed. The theory suggests that lasting academic performance is tied to environments where students feel heard, capable, and connected.

This theory is central to understanding the importance of involving students in decision-making processes. In the context of Gakenke District, providing children with a voice in educational matters can fulfill their need for autonomy and competence, enhancing their intrinsic motivation to learn (Niemann, Viehmann, & Barth, 2014). By participating in school decisions, students develop a sense of control and relevance in their education, which can lead to better academic engagement and improved outcomes. SDT provides a strong theoretical lens to assess how supportive environments contribute to educational success.

## 2.3 Empirical Review

This section provides an empirical analysis of studies conducted on the relationship between children's participation in decision-making processes and their academic performance. It draws from global, regional, and local perspectives to contextualize the issue and identify gaps in existing literature. While numerous studies highlight the positive outcomes of student participation, few have statistically examined the impact, particularly in underrepresented regions like Rwanda and its districts such as Gakenke.

### 2.3.1 Children's Participation and Academic Performance

A global study by UNESCO (2020), involving 25 countries across Asia, Europe, and Latin America, found that schools with structured student participation mechanisms experienced a 19% higher academic performance rate compared to those with top-down approaches. Using one-way ANOVA, the study revealed a statistically significant difference in academic achievement between schools that practiced inclusive decision-making and those that did not ( $F(2, 720) = 6.37, p < 0.01$ ). These findings suggest that involving children in academic and administrative decisions leads to improved learning outcomes. However, the research focused primarily on countries with advanced student engagement policies and lacked representation from Sub-Saharan Africa. This highlights a gap in understanding how similar practices translate in resource-constrained or culturally different contexts.

In a study conducted in the United Kingdom and Canada, Jones and Brown (2021) found that student involvement in school decisions, such as classroom policies and curriculum input, led to a 23% improvement in student academic performance. ANOVA results showed a significant relationship between student participation and academic success ( $F(3, 460) = 8.12, p < 0.001$ ). The researchers emphasized that such participation fosters responsibility, motivation, and a sense of ownership in students. Despite these encouraging findings, the study was conducted in well-resourced schools with supportive infrastructures, leaving a gap in understanding how these findings might differ in low-income or rural education systems where student voice may be limited or culturally discouraged.

A multi-country study by Adeyemi and Osokoya (2018), spanning Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa, investigated the impact of student participation in school decision-making on academic performance. The study found that schools that implemented participatory structures recorded a 17% increase in students' performance in national exams. The ANOVA test conducted showed significant variance in academic performance based on levels of student involvement ( $F(4, 1050) = 5.94, p < 0.05$ ). While the findings underscore the positive impact of children's participation, the research identified that cultural norms and administrative rigidity hinder full implementation of participatory models. The study did not disaggregate data by rural versus urban settings, which presents a gap in understanding localized barriers to participation.

A study by Ndaruhutse (2019) on schools across East African Community (EAC) member states Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda revealed that schools with

frameworks for student engagement reported a 15% higher academic performance than those without such practices. ANOVA results indicated a statistically significant relationship between student engagement and academic achievement ( $F(2, 390) = 4.85, p = 0.028$ ). Despite this, only 29% of schools in the sample had formal mechanisms for student participation. The study noted that traditional hierarchical systems often limited students' ability to influence school affairs. The gap in this research lies in its broad national-level focus, with insufficient attention to district-level disparities and rural contexts where participation may be even more constrained.

In Rwanda, a study by Uwamariya (2019) highlighted that student participation in academic-related decision-making was implemented in only 18% of schools nationwide, with a noted 12% increase in academic performance among these schools. The study's ANOVA results confirmed a significant positive effect ( $F(1, 180) = 3.96, p < 0.05$ ), showing that even limited participation can yield measurable academic benefits. However, the study was national in scope and did not explore variations within specific districts such as Gakenke. Given Gakenke's rural characteristics and challenges related to infrastructure and teacher capacity, there remains a critical gap in localized research on how student participation or lack thereof impacts educational outcomes at the district level.

### 3. Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research design to explore how children's participation in decision-making processes influences academic performance in Gakenke District, Rwanda. Guided by Churchill & Gilbert's (2021) definition, the research blueprint served as a structured framework for data collection and analysis. It ensured accuracy in hypothesis testing and effective interpretation of findings. A pilot study was carried out to refine the instruments before full-scale data collection. Questionnaires, observation checklists, and documentary analysis formed the main tools for data gathering. Ethical considerations were strictly upheld, including informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. Data management employed coding and anonymization techniques, and data analysis was carried out using SPSS 25 to produce both descriptive and inferential statistics.

The target population for the study consisted of 481 individuals, including students, teachers, parents, and educational authorities from 13 schools in Gakenke District. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representativeness across the different categories of respondents. Using Yamane's formula at a 5% significance level, the sample size was determined to be 218 participants. This approach allowed for efficient data

gathering while ensuring statistical reliability. The study included 118 students, 24 teachers, 20 educational authorities, and 56 parents. These participants were selected to capture comprehensive perspectives on the role of child participation in academic contexts.

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used in the selection of respondents. While stratified sampling allowed for the inclusion of various demographic categories, purposive sampling ensured that only individuals relevant to the research objectives were chosen. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires, designed with closed-ended questions using Likert scales ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Secondary data was sourced from government reports, published research, academic journals, and official databases, providing context and supporting the primary findings with existing literature. For data collection, the study relied heavily on questionnaires due to their convenience and efficiency. Respondents completed the instruments independently, ensuring authenticity in responses. To complement the questionnaires, documentary analysis was conducted using various published and unpublished sources. Data processing involved editing for consistency, coding responses into categories, and tabulating results for analysis. The SPSS software facilitated descriptive statistics like means, frequencies, and standard deviations, alongside inferential tests including Pearson correlation and regression analysis. These techniques helped to assess the strength and direction of relationships between children's participation, quality of decision-making, communication channels, and academic performance.

The analysis model used in the study was  $Y = B_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$ , where  $Y$  represented academic performance,  $X_1$  was children's participation. The statistical approach allowed the researcher to measure the extent to which each variable contributed to the dependent variable. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize data through mean scores and standard deviations, while Pearson correlation helped determine the nature and strength of relationships between the study variables. Interpretation of standard deviation values provided insights into the consistency of responses among different participant groups.

To test the reliability of the research instrument, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used, with a minimum accepted threshold of 0.70, ensuring internal consistency of the questionnaire items. Validity was established through expert review and a pilot test with 10 randomly selected respondents. This process ensured the questions were clear, relevant, and capable of capturing the intended concepts. The pilot test also helped estimate the time needed for full data collection and identified any ambiguities in the

questionnaire. These measures strengthened the credibility and dependability of the study findings.

Despite these strengths, the study encountered several limitations. Some respondents were initially reluctant to provide information, fearing misuse beyond academic purposes. However, presentation of academic credentials and research intent helped address these concerns. Another challenge was the vast geographical size and population of Gakenke District, which made it impractical to study the entire population. To mitigate this, sampling techniques were employed to manage time and resources effectively. Ethical considerations remained central throughout the research process, with respect for participants' privacy, dignity, and voluntary participation upheld at all times.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the findings derived from the data collected in relation to the study's main research question. The primary objective of this study was to examine the contribution of children's participation in decision-making processes to their academic performance in Gakenke District, Rwanda. The analysis is structured to reflect the key variables under investigation, including children's participation and academic performance.

### 4.1 Findings

This section presents a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the research findings in alignment with the main objective of the study, which was to examine the relationship between the level of children's participation in decision-making processes and academic performance outcomes in Gakenke District, Rwanda. The findings were derived from both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to a representative sample of

218 respondents, including students, teachers, parents, and educational authorities from the 12 Years Basic Education (12YBE) schools in Gakenke District. Secondary data were gathered from relevant reports, government documents, and academic literature to support and validate the primary data. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize demographic characteristics, while means and standard deviations were applied to analyze responses related to the study's specific objectives. Inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analyses, were employed to assess the strength, direction, and predictive value of the relationship between children's participation in decision-making and academic performance. The results provide empirical evidence on the influence of participatory practices in education on student outcomes, offering valuable insights into improving academic achievement in the Rwandan context, particularly within Gakenke District.

#### 4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics of level of children's participation in decision-making processes

This section presents an analysis of the research hypothesis by exploring respondents' perceptions based on the survey questions. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize and present the data in a clear and meaningful manner. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' attitudes, where 5 represents Strongly Agree, 4 stands for Agree, 3 denotes Neutral, 2 for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree. This method allowed the researchers to systematically interpret and categorize the participants' views regarding the level of children's involvement in decision-making processes. The summarized results of this descriptive analysis are shown in Table 1 below

**Table 1. Level of agreement on level of children's participation in decision-making processes**

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My school encourages student input in decision-making processes.	218	4.09	1.31
I believe my involvement in decision-making positively impacts my grades.	218	4.03	1.35
The school provides platforms for students to voice their opinions.	218	3.95	1.41
I feel more motivated to perform academically when I am included in decisions.	218	4.79	0.83
Valid N (listwise)	218		

**Source:** Field data, 2025

The data presented in Table 1 reveals generally positive perceptions among respondents regarding children's involvement in school decision-making processes. The statement "I feel more motivated to perform academically when I am included in decisions" received the highest mean

score of 4.79 with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.83, indicating strong agreement and consistent responses among participants. This suggests that students highly value inclusion in decision-making, and such involvement significantly boosts their academic motivation.

The next highest mean scores were recorded for the statements "My school encourages student input in decision-making processes" (Mean = 4.09, SD = 1.31) and "I believe my involvement in decision-making positively impacts my grades" (Mean = 4.03, SD = 1.35). These results suggest a positive perception of the school's efforts to engage students in governance and decision-making, as well as a belief in the academic benefits that result from such involvement. However, the standard deviations for these items are relatively high, indicating that while many students agree, there is some variability in opinions—possibly due to differences in how various schools or teachers implement participatory practices.

The statement "The school provides platforms for students to voice their opinions" had the lowest mean score of 3.95, although still close to the "Agree" category. This, coupled with the highest standard deviation of 1.41, implies that there may be inconsistencies in how accessible or effective

these platforms are across schools. Some students may feel empowered to speak up, while others may not feel the same level of support. Overall, the descriptive statistics suggest that while there is a generally favorable attitude toward student participation in decision-making, there is room for improvement, particularly in ensuring consistent access to participatory platforms for all students.

### 4.1.3 Inferential statistics

This section presents the inferential statistics, including both correlation and regression analyses, to explore the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable in the study. The aim is to provide a deeper understanding of how independent variables influence the dependent variable, using statistical methods to make inferences about the broader population based on the sample data.

**Table 2: Tests of Normality**

	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Child participation	.086	215	.071	.972	215	.060
Academic performance	.116	215	.113	.963	215	.090

Source: Field data, 2025

Table 2 presents the results of normality tests for child participation and academic performance. For child participation, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic is 0.086 with a significance value of 0.071, and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic is 0.972 with a significance value of 0.060, both of which are above the typical threshold of 0.05, indicating that the data is approximately normally distributed. Similarly, for academic performance, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic is 0.116 with a significance value of 0.113, and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic is 0.963 with a significance value of 0.090, suggesting that this data also

follows a normal distribution. These findings suggest that both variables exhibit normality, which supports the use of parametric statistical methods, such as correlation and regression, in subsequent analyses.

#### 4.1.3.1 Correlation Analysis

The findings of the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variables are summarized and presented in Table 3

**Table 3: Correlation between independent variable and dependent variable**

		Child participation	Academic Performance
Child participation	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	218	
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.692**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	218	218

Source: Field data, 2025

The correlation analysis in Table 3 reveals a strong positive relationship between child participation in decision-making processes and academic performance, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.692, indicating a

significant and moderate to strong correlation. This suggests that as children's participation increases, their academic performance tends to improve. The significance value (0.000) confirms that this correlation is statistically

significant, meaning the relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. The sample size of 218 further supports the reliability of these findings.

#### 4.1.3.2 Regression analysis

This section presents the results of the regression analysis, which is used to examine the nature and strength of the

relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. By modeling these relationships, regression analysis helps in predicting the dependent variable based on the values of the independent variables, providing deeper insights into their influence and potential causal effects.

**Table 4. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.735 <sup>a</sup>	.540	.531	.4492

- a. Predictors: Child participation
- b. Dependent variable: Academic Performance

Table 4 presents the results of the regression analysis, which shows a strong positive relationship between child participation and academic performance. The R value of 0.735 indicates a strong correlation, while the R square value of 0.540 means that approximately 54% of the variation in academic performance can be explained by child participation. The Adjusted R square of 0.531 further supports this, indicating that after adjusting for model

complexity, about 53.1% of the variance in academic performance is still explained by child participation. The Standard Error of the Estimate is 0.4492, suggesting a moderate level of error in predicting academic performance, but still indicating a reasonably accurate model. Overall, the regression analysis demonstrates that child participation has a significant impact on academic performance, explaining over half of its variance.

**Table 5. ANOVA results**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49.781	4	12.445	61.610	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	42.378	210	.202		
	Total	92.159	214			

- a. Predictors: Child participation
- b. Dependent variable: Academic Performance

Table 5 presents the ANOVA results for the regression analysis, showing that child participation is a significant predictor of academic performance. The regression sum of squares of 49.781 indicates that child participation explains a substantial portion of the variance in academic performance, while the residual sum of squares of 42.378 represents the unexplained variation. The F-statistic of

61.610 is high, suggesting that the model fits the data well, and the significance value (Sig.) of 0.000 indicates that the relationship between child participation and academic performance is statistically significant. Overall, the results confirm that child participation has a meaningful impact on academic performance and that the regression model is a valid and reliable predictor.

**Table 6. Regression Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.780	.190		4.107	.000
	Child participation	.244	.087	.215	2.806	.006

- a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Table 6 presents the regression coefficients, showing that child participation has a statistically significant and positive impact on academic performance. The

unstandardized coefficient (B) for child participation is 0.244, meaning that each unit increase in child participation is associated with an increase of 0.244 units

in academic performance. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.215 indicates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. The t-value of 2.806 and significance value (Sig.) of 0.006 confirm that the relationship is statistically significant. Additionally, the constant value of 0.780 is also significant with a t-value of 4.107 and Sig. = 0.000, suggesting that the model is valid. Overall, these results indicate that child participation is a meaningful predictor of academic performance, with a positive and significant effect.

## 4.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study highlight the importance of child participation in decision-making processes and its potential impact on academic performance. The data suggest that students who feel more involved in decisions related to their schooling tend to show higher motivation and academic achievement. This aligns with existing research that emphasizes how student participation fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to greater engagement in academic work. Involvement in decision-making provides students with a platform to voice their opinions, which, in turn, helps them feel valued and motivated to perform better.

The positive relationship between child participation and academic performance suggests that engaging students in educational decisions could lead to improved outcomes. This connection underscores the potential benefits of creating environments where students have a role in shaping their learning experiences. By fostering a culture of participation, schools may be able to enhance student engagement, which is a critical factor in academic success. The findings imply that when students feel their opinions matter, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning, contributing to better academic results.

Furthermore, the regression analysis points to the fact that child participation is a significant predictor of academic performance. This suggests that, beyond motivation, there may be other underlying factors at play, such as the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a deeper connection to the learning process. Schools that encourage student involvement may see a direct correlation between this participation and improved academic outcomes. By fostering a participatory culture, educational institutions can provide students with the opportunity to develop both academically and personally, which can lead to positive long-term results.

While the findings indicate a significant relationship between child participation and academic performance, it is important to note that other factors may also contribute to academic success. For example, teaching quality, home environment, and peer relationships all play crucial roles in

determining a student's academic performance. The findings suggest that child participation is one important factor, but future research should explore how it interacts with these other variables to provide a more holistic understanding of academic achievement.

Additionally, the normality tests indicated that the data followed a normal distribution, which supports the use of parametric analyses like regression and correlation in this study. Meeting the assumption of normality is vital for ensuring the validity of these tests and the reliability of the conclusions drawn from them. The fact that the data met this assumption adds confidence to the results, suggesting that the observed relationships between child participation and academic performance are meaningful and not influenced by skewed data.

Despite the positive findings, the R-squared value in the regression model indicates that while child participation accounts for a significant portion of the variance in academic performance, there are other factors at play that were not included in the study. This points to the need for further research that includes a broader range of variables to better understand the complex nature of academic achievement. Factors such as socio-economic status, parental involvement, and school resources may also be contributing to student performance and should be explored in future studies.

Findings of this study indicate the importance of child participation in decision-making as a key factor in improving academic performance. Encouraging student involvement in decisions that affect their educational experience not only fosters motivation but also creates a more engaged and responsible student body. By supporting this form of participation, schools can positively influence student outcomes. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of child participation and to examine the broader range of factors that contribute to academic success.

These findings are in agreement with previous research that highlights the positive impact of child participation on academic performance. For instance, Warren (2018) found that student involvement in decision-making processes led to increased engagement and improved academic results. Similarly, O'Farrell (2020) observed that when students were actively involved in shaping their educational experiences, they demonstrated higher motivation and academic success. Harrison et al. (2019) also supported this view, emphasizing that participation in decision-making fosters a sense of responsibility and intrinsic motivation, which directly influences academic outcomes. Furthermore, Shirley and Smith (2021) demonstrated that child participation enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills, leading to higher academic performance,

particularly in subjects requiring higher-order cognitive abilities. These studies reinforce the findings of this study, suggesting that promoting student participation in educational decisions can significantly contribute to improved academic performance.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This section presents the conclusions drawn from the study, along with recommendations for practice and future research.

### 5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant contribution of child participation to enhancing academic performance. The findings reveal a positive correlation between students' involvement in decision-making processes and their academic outcomes, with increased participation leading to higher motivation, responsibility, and engagement in learning. The regression analysis further confirms that child participation is a meaningful predictor of academic success, suggesting that fostering a participatory culture within schools could contribute to improved educational achievement. These results emphasize the importance of involving students in decisions that affect their education, highlighting the potential long-term benefits for both individual student development and overall school performance.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Schools should create platforms and opportunities for students to participate in decisions related to their education, such as curriculum design, classroom rules, and school policies. This involvement can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility, which, as the study suggests, can lead to increased motivation and academic performance.
2. Teachers and school administrators should be trained on the benefits of child participation and how to effectively involve students in decision-making processes. Training programs should focus on creating an inclusive environment where students feel empowered to express their opinions, which will help improve both their academic and personal development.
3. Schools should encourage greater collaboration between students, parents, and educators in decision-making. By working together, they can

create a more supportive and holistic approach to education that takes into account the perspectives and needs of all stakeholders, ultimately enhancing the academic success of students.

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