

Assessing Community Participation in Child Protection in South Gondar Zone, Ethiopia

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Abstract:

This study was designed to assess community participation in child protection in South Gondar Zone Ethiopia. A sample of 398 participants was selected from three administrative towns through a stratified random sampling technique. Community Child Protection Scale and a questionnaire on demographic information were used in the present study. Descriptive statistics, one-sample t-test, independent sample t-test, one way ANOVA, and post hoc analysis were employed for analysis. A result revealed that local community participation in child protection is insignificant. The study also discovered that there is no significant difference in participation in child protection amongst male and female participants. However, the study demonstrated that there is a significant statistical difference observed in community participation in child protection across respondents' age; educational status and marital status. GOs, NGOs, and other concerned bodies should design continuous and regular community awareness-raising programs regarding a more comprehensive approach to child protection systems in general and bottom up child protection systems in particular.

Keywords: 1.Community, 2.Community participation, 3.Child protection, 4.South Gondar Zone

Introduction

Child protection is the prevention of and response to exploitation, abuse, neglect, harmful practices and violence against children. It is set firmly in to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. Child protection is global: it applies to all children everywhere, from low- to high-income countries (UNICEF, 2006). The International Save the Children Alliance, (2008) stated that protecting children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation is everyone's responsibility. Families, communities, governments (GOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and children themselves collectively play a critical role in realizing children's rights to protection.

Child protection is of relevant to all children and not just the children considered at high risk of rights violations or who live in vulnerable situations, although they may have particular protection requirements. As a result, child protection is the responsibility of society as a whole and involves a range of groups (UNICEF, 2004). Where children are protected, their health, education and well-being are improved as well as their ability to contribute to society as future citizens become significant (Tizita, 2015). According to Bronfenbrenner ecological model of child development (1979) cited in Wessells, (2009) children's protection and healthy development depend critically on the care and protection provided by caretakers; typically, family and extended family. However, families' ability to supply care and protection for youngsters depends on having a secure, protective environment, and access to child and family supports at the community level. The community is a crucial source of potential support; since it includes friends, neighbors, traditional leaders, elders, teachers, youth groups, religious leaders, and others who provide valuable care and protection.

In Ethiopia, communities have their own ways of dealing with problems that affect its members. They have helped each other through times of poverty, accidents, chronic issues, disease, and the death of members. Traditional support networks such as Idir, Ekub and Mahiber are local community associations formed by member to support others in uncertain times (Abebe, 2016). The role of community-based support systems, on the other hand, is frequently considered as informal and has received less attention in the research (Kassaw, 2006).

Community protection procedures and actions, in practice, serve as the first line of protection for children. They are critical elements in bridging the gap between overarching concepts and policies and specific behaviors on the ground. It is also important to draw on existing mechanisms and practices, such as community and kin networks, as well as customary and traditional practices, when more formalized mechanisms are formed. This is based on the notion that better coordination between community processes and the larger system can lead to better results for children and families (UNICEF, 2010).

Prior research has largely focused on risk and protective factors at the individual and interpersonal levels of the socio-ecological model. More recently, research has begun to examine risk and protective factors at the community and societal levels, with results suggesting that programmatic and policy interventions that reduce risk and enhance protection at these levels are promising primary prevention strategies for child maltreatment (Anna, Alexandria & Meghan, 2020).

Even if child protection programming in the international development sector has experienced a significant global ideological shift over the past decade, but not much inquiry has been particularly on the role of the community informal systems in the protection of children in sub Saharan Africa. A holistic approach to child protection requires the engagement of both formal and informal child protection systems. There is however inadequate information and lack of consensus among practitioners and therefore the academia of what constitutes community informal protection systems (Wulczyn et al., 2010).

Therefore, each day the safety and well-being of children across the nation are threatened by child abuse and neglect. Working to have a positive impact on the lives of these children and their families is not the responsibility of any single agency or professional group, but rather is a shared community concern (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

In Ethiopia, limited studies have been conducted to investigate the contribution of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the care and support services to orphan and vulnerable children, yet their contribution, successes and challenges are understudied and usually overshadowed by large NGOs and government programs (Zewudie, 2013). There are few studies focused on the role of CBOs in child protection. For example, Tizita (2015) conducted a qualitative study on child protection response through community based multi-stakeholders approach. Additionally, Zewudie, (2013) conducted a qualitative study on community based care and support efforts in promoting the wellbeing of AIDS orphans. However, the above mentioned and other previously done studies focused only on services of CBOs to children who are in need of help; little attention has been given to assess the extent to which the general community participate in child protection and therefore the role of socio demographic variables in child protection. Thus, to meet the aforementioned research gaps, this study unlike previous studies, aims to assess community participation in child protection through employing quantitative research approach. The following are the research questions of this study.

- To what extent local communities participate in child protection?
- Is there any significant difference in community participation in child protection across respondents' demographic variables such as sex, age, educational status and marital status?

Community

It's crucial to understand the definition of "community." A community can be described in a variety of ways. It is defined as a group of people who live in a specific area and are prepared to work together to achieve a common purpose such as harvesting a crop McKeown et al. (1987); Patrick et al. (1995); Zakus & Lysack (1998) cited in Wessells, (2018). The concept of community includes two key ideas: a structural dimension and a functional dimension. The notion of structure refers to an outlined geographic area, and therefore the functional idea appears within the social and psychological aspects, the target needs and therefore the shared interests of the group. Another important aspect of a community's nature is participation, which is made up of individual and collective social processes linked to political, social and cultural forces and which aims to transform relationships of authority (Aldemar, 2011).

Community Participation

Community participation may be a widely used concept and its definition doesn't always neatly fit into one discipline. In the health sector, it's defined as a process whereby people, both individually and in groups, exercise their right to play a lively and direct role within the development and delivery of appropriate health services (Oakley & Kahssay, 1999). Political scientists focus on votes and decision-making, while agricultural economists explain it as a process of farmers getting benefits (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977) cited in (Hassan, Ong'ayo & Osore, 2019). The common understanding is that community participation entails involving communities in assessing their own needs and in developing strategies to meet them, thus increasing intervention ownership and sustainability (Grabman, Miltenburg, Marston, & Portela, 2017).

According to Danny, Frances, Marilyn, Pete and Mandy, (2004) community participation concerns the engagement of individuals and communities in decisions about things that affect their lives. Sometimes people don't want to be involved in deciding, but it's our view that everybody should have the chance to do so. Community participation means every members of community are playing an active part and have a big degree of power and influence.

Aldemar, (2011) asserted that community participation promotes civil society autonomy relative to the state and direct action in the local action plan. In this sense, community participation is a process of social decision making, intervention in and transformation of reality and relationships of power. From this perspective, community participation is a social process of decision making, intervention and transformation of reality that promotes horizontal power relations. In the context of this study, however, the term community participation is operationalized as the involvement of all local communities in child protection issues.

The Significance of Community Participation

Danny et al.; (2004) wrote the significance of community participation. Some of the crucial reasons of community participation are:

- It enhances social cohesion because communities value the value of working in cooperation with each other and with legal agencies.
- It enhances effectiveness as communities bring understanding, knowledge and experience essential to the regeneration process.
- It enables policy to be applicable to original communities.
- It gives local people the occasion to develop networks that are demanded to address social rejection.

- It promotes sustainability because community members have ownership of their communities and can develop the confidence and skills to sustain developments once the 'extra' resources have gone.

Child Protection

Child protection refers to the prevention and response to child abuse, exploitation, and abuse (UNICEF, 2008). Commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, child labor, and harmful cultural practices including female genital cutting and child marriage are all included (UNICEF, 2008). Child protection is a broader concept that includes primary risk indicators that must be addressed in order to determine the child's best interests. This indicators includes (1) birth registration, (2) child marriage, (4) female genital mutilation, (5) child labor, (6) sexual exploitation and abuse of children, (7) child trafficking, (8) migration, (9) children with disabilities, (10) children without parental care, (11) children in the justice system, (12) children in emergencies, (13) landmines, (14) explosive remnants of war, and small arms UNICEF, (2008). Save the Children, (2007) defines child protection as measures and structures to help and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children. Child protection means securing children from detriment. The thing of child protection is to promote, cover and fulfill children's rights to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights conventions and public laws.

The Significance of Community Participation in Child Protection

According to Beckett, (2003) child protection is a delicate and complicated task in which the society believes, children should be defended from detriment but they also raise a point that the stranger shouldn't intrude in to particular connections. With this, the role of community participation is vital in order to address the holistic requirements of children.

The term "child protection" may conjure up ideas of police, social workers, or trained child protection personnel intervening in major crimes against children. In truth, most children around the world grow up never having spoken to a police, a social worker, or a child protection professional. The majority of the work to keep children safe is usually done by family members, neighbors, and other community members. Families and communities, on the whole, are the ones who do the heavy work when it comes to ensuring the safety and well-being of children. Of course, child protection workers, social workers, and police officers are important components of a larger child protection system. Ordinary people, such as family members and community members, are the backbone of good child safety programs. Children's protection at the local, grassroots level will likely deteriorate if they are not effectively supported (Wessells, 2018).

Participation is a key for a successful community-based childcare intervention. Direct and meaningful involvement of the community is veritably pivotal in all aspects of decision. Therefore, the community should be encouraged to share in designing, enforcing, managing, assessing and organizing assets to prevent children from abuse, neglect and exploitation (Ministry of Women Affairs, 2009). Community provides a child support, a sense of belonging, a strong sense of tone and sense of connection. Children feel emotionally and physically safe and valued; they develop social capacities and have a sense of sharing and minding for each other. Without being part of a community, a child soon feels isolated, develops felling of shame, feels like a failure and starved of love.

Socio-Demographic Factors Affecting Community Participation

In the literature, several authors agree that demographic and socio-economic factors have a high influence on community participation. For example, Bauma *et al.*, (2000) stated that the level of participation in the life of the social and civic community is considerably influenced by the person socio-economic status and other demographic characteristics. Furthermore, Plummer, (2002) emphasized that factors such as gender, education level, cultural beliefs, employment, ability and knowledge, social and political marginalization to be the key to influence the participation of the community.

Thomas, (2005) indicated that significant gender and ethnic differences in community service participation rates. Specifically, with reference to gender, adult working females show higher rates of participation than adult working males. However, Gabayon, (2010) found that there was no significant difference in participation based on gender as both males and females had almost the same participation rate.

Oladele, (2012) claimed that age plays an important role in community participation. Likewise, Harill, (2004) also reported that age influenced inhabitants' outlooks towards community participation in general. On the contrary, Gabayon, (2010) found that age does not define people's participation in local community wellbeing issues. Hassan, et al., (2019) also demonstrated that there was no significant difference between the different age categories in terms of community participation.

Educational level of the community has a significant correlation in the level of public participation John, (2009). Moreover, Hassan, et al.; (2019) asserted that level of education is a determinant of community participation in social actions. Furthermore, Fakere and Ayoola, (2018) claimed that educational level tends to make people to be curious of goings-on in their neighborhoods and increases their willingness to participate. However, Dorsner, (2004) reported that high academic level can hinder community participation in general.

Interims of marital status the majority studies stated that married people are more likely to participate in the community issues. For example, Fakere and Ayoola, (2018) asserted that people that have married tend to desire to have a suitable place of residence for their children to live in; and this influences their decision to participate choose house such environments would be shaped.

Methods of the Study

Description of the Study Area

The study conducted in South Gondar Zone, specifically in Woreta, Nifasmewucha, and Addiszemen administrative towns. South Gondar zone is found in Amhara regional state, Ethiopia. The capital city of the zone is Debre Tabor. South Gondar is bordered on the South by East Gojjam, on the North by Gondar, on the West by Lake Tana, and on the East by North Wollo. The highest point in South Gondar is Mount Guna (4,231 meters). Towns and cities in this zone include, Debre Tabor, Wereta, Nifas Mewucha and Addiszemen.

Research Design

The main purpose of this study is assessing community participation in child protection in South Gondar zone. A Non-experimental survey research design was employed to conduct this study. Survey research design is concerned with the present and attempts to determine the status of the phenomena being investigated (Singh, 2006). For this purpose, the study was employed quantitative approach data gathering and analysis.

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The target population for this study were community members who are living in Amhara region, South Gondar zone, specifically in Woreta, Addiszemen and Nifasmewucha administrative towns. For this study, community comprises members whose age is above 18 years old.

According to the population and household census of 2007, the urban population of Woreta, Addiszemen and Nifasmewucha towns were 71,511. Of whom 35,381 were men while 36,130 were women. In the study towns a total of 12 kebeles are found (each town holds 4 kebele). Out of this, 6 kebeles (2 kebeles from each town) were selected using simple random sampling technique (lottery method).

For survey questionnaire, 398 household heads (M = 197, F = 201) were selected in all sampled *kebeles* through proportional stratified sampling. From each stratum male and female participants' were selected through simple random sampling technique. In order to determine the sample size, the researchers employed Yamane's, (1967) sample size determination formula.

Data Gathering Instruments

The instrument used to gather information questionnaires comprising two sections. The first section is to get information on demographic variables concerning sex, age, educational status, marital status, and religion. The other section was used to collect data about the respondents' participation in child protection.

The section meant for measuring community child protection consisted of *20 items with five point rating scale*: ranging from not at all true (1) to totally true (5). The items were prepared by the researcher using related literature and reviewed based on the pilot study findings. In addition the tools was also reviewed by researchers in this field for similar content and face validity and checked by two social workers and two social psychologists who are currently working in child protection issues. For those samples who cannot read and write; readers and writers were assigned during data collection dates. Each item was converted to Amharic language for more understanding. To check the reliability of a measure, pilot taste was conducted by taking people from one selected town which is outside the study area. For this study, the reliability coefficient of community participation in child protection scale was 0.825.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data analysis technique was employed for the present study. The data gathered through questionnaire was analyzed by using descriptive statistics, one sample t-test, independent sample t- test, one way ANOVA, and post hoc analysis. Percentage, frequency, means and standard deviation were applied to analyze demographic variables. One sample t-test was employed to explore the extent to which local communities' participate in child protection. In order to investigate sex difference in participation in child protection independent sample t- test was employed. One way ANOVA and post hoc analysis were applied to measure whether statistical significant differences observed in community participation in child protection across respondents' age, educational status and marital status.

Results and Discussion

Results

Demographic Information of Participants

Among 398 sample participants who took part in this study, 371 respondents returned the survey. Out of this, 192 (51.8%) respondents were females and 179 (48.2%) were males. Regarding participants' age group, 101 (27.2%) of the participants were found between the age of 18 and 30 years, 101 (27.2%) were found between the age of 31 and 40 years of age, 84 (22.6) were between 41-50, 55 (14.8%) were between 51-60 and 30 (8.1%) were 61 and above years of age. Coming to the educational status, 78 (21%) were completed primary education (1-8); 71 (19.1%) were Degree holders; 62 (16.7%) were completed secondary education (9-12); 55 (14.8%) were Diploma holders; 44 (11.9%) were Certificate holders and 25 (6.7%) were MA/MSc and above graduates. Concerning respondents marital status, 206 (55.5%) were married, 71 (19.1%), 57 (15.4%) were divorced whereas 37(10%) were widowed. Demographic information of the sample was presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Female	192	51.8
Male	179	48.2
Age		
age 18-30	101	27.2
age 31-40	101	27.2
age 41-50	84	22.6
age 51-60	55	14.8
age 61 & above	30	8.1
Educational Status		
Illiterate	36	9.7
1-8	78	21.0
9-12	62	16.7
Certificate	44	11.9
Diploma	55	14.8
Degree	71	19.1
Post Graduate	25	6.7
Marital Status		
Single	71	19.1
Married	206	55.5
Divorced	57	15.4
Widowed	37	10
TOTAL	371	100

Level of Local Community Participation in Child Protection

The first section this study planned to address was the level of participation of local people in child protection. Participants' were asked 20 questions about their level of participation in child protection with a rating on a 5 point Likert scale: Not at all true (1), Somewhat true (2), Moderately true (3), Mostly true (4) and Totally true (5). One sample t-test was used to determine the level of community participation in child protection. The observed mean value of respondents' participation in child protection compared with the expected mean value of 60. This value was determined by the number of community participation in child protection items (20) multiplied by the maximum number of scale 5 (Totally true) plus the minimum scale value 1 (Not at all true) multiplied by the number of community participation in child protection items (20) divided by 2. In other words $20 \times 5 + 20 \times 1$ divided by 2. Therefore, the expected mean value was 60. If the actual or observed mean of participation in child protection is greater than the expected mean value of 60 the status of respondents participation in child protection is good, whereas, when the expected t- value is greater than or equal to the observed mean their participation is weak. This was presented on Table 2.

Table 2: Level of Local Community Participation in Child Protection Mean, Standard Deviation, t- obtained value: (N=371).

One-Sample Test							
Test value = 60							
Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-obtained	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
CP in CP Sum	371	44.9596	14.81803	-19.550	370	0.000	-15.04043

As it can be seen from Table 2, the obtained result revealed that respondents' participation in child protection is significantly lower than the expected level. The mean value of community participation in child protection was statistically lower than the observed mean or test value $t(370) = -19.550$, $p = .000$. In other words, the mean value of community participation in child protection 44.96 is significantly lower than test value of 60. This tells us local community participation in child protection is insignificant.

Differences in Community Participation in Child Protection across Sex, Age, Educational Status and Marital Status

The other objective this study aimed to address was the differences in community participation in child protection across participants' sex, age, educational status and marital status. For the analysis of this question, independent sample t-test, a one-way ANOVA and post hoc comparison were computed on demographic variables such as sex, age, educational status and marital status.

Table 3: Independent Sample t-test Analysis for Sex

Sex	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Female	192	45.2656	15.70631	-.412	369	0.681
Male	179	44.6313	13.83849			

As it can be observed in Table 3, the study result revealed that even if there is a mean variation between female (M=45.26, SD=15.70) and male (M=44.63, SD=13.83), an independent sample t test result indicated that there was no significant difference found between females and males at the $p= 0.05$ level,) $t(369) = -0.412$, $p = 0.681$. Thus, for this study sex does not have an effect on community participation in child protection.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Summary Table of age of respondents and Scores

Age Groups	N	Mean	SD	F	P	η^2
18-30	101	49.6733	13.37394	19.066	.000	.172
31-40	101	50.2574	15.14969			
41-50	84	43.0952	14.64160			
51-60	55	35.4545	10.23396			
61 & above	30	33.9000	10.08020			

As shown in table 4, the ANOVA test result revealed that statistically significant difference is found among respondents with different age groups. There is statistical significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level $F(4, 366) = 19.066$, $p = .000$. The eta-squared of .172 confirmed that the mean difference of respondents' participation in child protection among the five groups was fairly large and significant. Hence, the result revealed that there was statistically significant variation in community participation in child protection based on the age group of respondents. As a result, this study found that people found between the age of 31 and 40 ($M=50.25$, $SD=15.14$), are more likely to participate in child protection issues, it was followed by people between the age of 18 and 30 ($M=49.67$, $SD=13.37$).

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA Summary Table of Educational Level of Respondents and its Scores

Education Groups	N	Mean	SD	F	P	η^2
Illiterate	36	29.0556	5.08187	98.874	.000	.619
1-8	78	34.3462	6.96154			
9-12	62	38.1129	9.08088			
Certificate	44	42.8409	12.31929			
Diploma	55	50.1091	9.66796			
Degree	71	61.5493	10.48371			
Post Graduate	25	63.2400	9.03825			

Table 5, shows the output of the ANOVA analysis and difference between the group means. According to the analysis of the table the significance value is .000 (i.e., $p = .000$), which is below 0.05 and, therefore, there is statistically significant difference between groups as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(6,364)=98.874$, $p = .000$). The eta-squared of .619 confirmed that the mean difference of respondents' participation in child protection among the seven groups was large and significant. Hence, the result revealed that there was statistically significant difference observed in community participation in child protection based on the education group of respondents. As a result, this study found that higher educated people are more likely to participate in child protection issues than the lower educated.

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA Summary Table of Marital Status and its Scores

Groups	N	Mean	SD	F	P	η^2
Single	71	43.0704	12.34194	9.424	.000	.071
Married	206	48.2961	15.45930			
Divorced	57	39.3158	14.50881			
Widowed	37	38.7027	10.52475			

One-way ANOVA also was performed to investigate the difference in the mean score of participation in child protection on the marital status of respondents. The statistical test shows that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean of participation in child protection for marital status among four groups, $F(3, 367)=9.424$, $p = .000$. In addition, since the numbers of cases not equal in groups, the post hoc comparison (Tukey test) were selected to evaluate pair wise differences among mean scores in community participation in child protection. The result of the test shows that there was significant mean score difference between married and single groups, married and divorced, and married and widowed groups since $p < .05$ were reported for three groups. These comparative result suggested that the married groups had high level of participation in child protection ($M=48.29$, $SD=15.45$), it was followed by single groups ($M=43.07$, $SD=12.34$). Eta-squared indicated that the proportion of variability in respondents' participation in child protection due to the marital status is .071. Therefore, the eta-squared of .071 which consider according to Cohen (1988) guideline showed a moderate effect. This means that the effect size of the marital status as an independent variable on the participation of child protection is moderate. The findings are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Result of Post hoc Comparison Test for Respondents by Marital Status

(I) Maritalstatus	(J) Maritalstatus	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Single	Married	-5.22569*	1.97297	.042	-10.3176	-.1338
	Divorced	3.75463	2.54966	.455	-2.8256	10.3349
	Widowed	4.36772	2.90687	.437	-3.1344	11.8699
Married	Single	5.22569*	1.97297	.042	.1338	10.3176
	Divorced	8.98033*	2.14561	.000	3.4429	14.5178
	Widowed	9.59341*	2.55984	.001	2.9869	16.1999
Divorced	Single	-3.75463	2.54966	.455	-10.3349	2.8256
	Married	-8.98033*	2.14561	.000	-14.5178	-3.4429
	Widowed	.61309	3.02670	.997	-7.1983	8.4245
Widowed	Single	-4.36772	2.90687	.437	-11.8699	3.1344
	Married	-9.59341*	2.55984	.001	-16.1999	-2.9869
	Divorced	-.61309	3.02670	.997	-8.4245	7.1983

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Discussion

Level of Community Participation in Child Protection

The main purpose of this study was to assess community participation in child protection. The quantitative data were collected from 371 samples. The obtained result revealed that the mean value of respondents' participation in child protection is significantly lower than the expected level. This tells us local community participation in child protection is insignificant. This finding is in line with Save the Children, (2011) reported that in Central and Western Liberia 94 percent of members of the community consider that children who are not living with their parents should be cared by the government. Like adults, most children agree that children who are not living with their parents should be cared by the government. In addition, Wessells, (2018) concluded that community involvement entails high levels of contribution and a devoted sense of responsibility by diverse people, which is vital for describing something as a community process or action. Yet the top-down formation of Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) typically limits the discussion of children's situation to a limited number of people, mainly the CWC members. This gives the mistaken impression that child protection in the community is somehow handled by the CWC. This may be the case that community participation in child protection is weak in the study area.

Sex Differences in Community Participation in Child Protection

An independent samples t test was conducted to compare community participation in child protection between female and male. The study result revealed that there was no significant difference in participation found between females and males. The finding of this study is in line with Gabayon, (2010) found that there was no significant difference in participation based on gender as both males and females had almost the same participation rate. However, the findings of this study are inconsistent with Thomas (2005) indicated that significant gender differences in community service participation rates where adult working females show higher rates of participation than adult working males.

Age Differences in Community Participation in Child Protection

The ANOVA test result revealed that statistically significant difference was detected in participation on child protection among respondents with different age groups. The study findings are similar to Oladele (2012) who claimed that age plays a vital role in community participation. Similarly, Harill, (2004) reported that age influenced inhabitants' outlooks towards community participation in general. However, the study results are not in line with Gabayon, (2010) who found that age does not define people's participation in local community wellbeing issues. The study findings are also contrary to Hassan, *et al.*, (2019) demonstrated that there was no significant difference between the different age categories in terms of community participation.

Educational Status Differences in Community Participation in Child Protection

The findings of this study confirmed that there is difference in participation in child protection based on the academic status of respondents. People with higher academic status are more likely to participate in child protection activities than those of lower academic status. The finding of this study is in line with Hassan, *et al.*; (2019) asserted that level of education is a determinant of community participation in social actions. Similarly, Fakere and Ayoola, (2018) claimed that educational level tends to make people to be curious of goings-on in their neighborhoods and increases their willingness to participate. The present study findings contradict with Dorsner (2004) reported that high academic level can hinder community participation in general.

Marital Status Differences in Community Participation in Child Protection

The finding of this study confirmed that married couples are more likely to participate in child protection than single, divorced and widowed people in their living community. The finding is supported by Fakere and Ayoola, (2018) asserted that people that have married tend to desire to have a suitable place of residence for their children to live in; and this influences their decision to participate in community issues.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been established that local community participation in child protection is insignificant in the study area. Except sex, other socio-demographic variables such as age, educational status and marital status of the participants' confirmed significant difference in participation in child protection. Therefore, GOs, NGOs, and other concerned bodies should design continuous and regular community awareness raising programs regarding a more comprehensive approach to child protection systems in general and bottom-up child protection system in particular.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

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