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### The Reasons for Special Talented Secondary School Remoteness Towards Student's Academic Performance: Case Study; Urban District at Zanzibar

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**Keywords:**

*Talented Students,  
Remoteness,  
School Remoteness,  
Academic Performance.*

This paper sought to investigate the reasons for special talented secondary school remoteness towards students' academic performance; a case study of Urban District Council in Zanzibar. Specific objectives were: to determine reasons for special talented secondary school remoteness in Urban district at Zanzibar, and to find out the strategies for improving students' academic performance in special talented secondary school remoteness in Zanzibar. This article employed a mixed approach research method and is centered and guided by social capital theory propounded by Robert Putnam in 1993. A sample of 151 respondents including 1 DEO, 6 head of schools, 36 teachers, 84 students and 24 parents were used. Simple random sampling techniques were used in selection of ordinary teachers and students while purposive sampling technique was used in selection of the head of schools, DEO and parents in the area of study. Questionnaires, interviews, and documentary reviews were used in data collections. The findings identified reasons for special talented secondary school remoteness in Urban District Council at Zanzibar include limited financial support, nomadic lifestyle, community's negative attitudes towards education, lack of open spaces for constructions of schools, geographical dispersion and unfriendly transport infrastructure. Lastly, the study proposed which can be used to improve students' academic performance in special talented secondary schools are construction of hostels, introduction of food programs, provision of transport facilities and clear policies on school locations.

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**Definition of Key terms;**

**Talented students:** are those students whose abilities are discovered early and if experts either at home or in school or even in society take care for them with support then they will be developed and they will have a great matter, but if nobody notice these abilities then they will vanish and disappear and the person who have these abilities will be like people who are obscure in society and the whole society will lose this grant divine that gave a lot, but people did not use it well (Shoffner & Newsome2001). The talented one or superior is the individual who has a willing or non-normal ability or special performance among colleagues in one domain or more domains which are appreciated by society, especially in mental superiority and creative thinking and academic achievement and skills and special abilities and he is the one who needs a special educational caring which cannot be offered by the school in the normal Curriculum (Perrone, Ksiazak, Wright, & Crane, 2010).

**Remoteness:** Remoteness is the state of being distant from something else, in particular from the main centers of population (Ronström, 2021).

**School Remoteness:** These are often defined as school that are located in isolation, long distances between places and scattered populations area(Mangione & Cannella, 2021).

**Academic Performance:** Academic performance can be defined as the extent to which an institution, a teacher, or a student achieves long- or short-term educational goals and the academic achievement of performance is usually measured by continuous assessments and overall cumulative grade point average (CGPA) achieved by the student (Hellas et al., 2018).

**INTRODUCTION**

Education is a vital pillar of human growth, and it plays a critical role in defining the future of nations.

Educators and policymakers have continually investigated numerous techniques in improving academic performance in the question of delivering equal and excellent education to all pupils (Stewart, 2010). One of such method is the implementation of specific talent programs within the educational system. These programs are intended to recognize and nurture kids' unique talents and abilities, which can span a wide range of fields such as sports, arts, sciences, and more.

Research article titled “Parental roles in Talent Development” noted that, in a world where academic merits seem to be everything that matters performance continue to nurture the individual talents of students when educating the next generation of leaders. Motivated and driven young people have the potential to become the young people and higher achiever (Kiewra, 2021). Other researcher state that, the talent development program is a comprehensive reform model that transform the structure and curriculum of schools with the aim of improving students’ achievements and raising teacher and student expectations (Eric, 2013). However, the talented students need the surroundings that allow them to express and develop their talents, ideas and creativity (Susan, 2023). A supportive school environment that not only allows but support and encourages them to demonstrate those traits plays crucial roles. Therefore, finding and choosing the right school is a key decision in their personal development.

In order to provide education for all, the Zanzibar education policy of 1991 has stated that, the politics of ASP immediately after the revolution of 1964 becomes a tool to bring about equality in Zanzibar. Thus, why it decided that education will be provides free of charge from primary to higher level. (Zanzibar Education Policy, Ministry of Education 1991). The policy stated that there will be secondary education which will be special talent schools and general secondary education. Where by the

government will encourage, establish and put more emphasize on special talent schools and special vocational schools in line with needs of the community. (Zanzibar Education Policy, Ministry of Education, April 1991).

Special talent program considered to be one among the best practice in improving students' academic performance in promoting and expanding mindset, motivating students and improve academic risk taking, in recognizing student's potentiality than focusing on general ability measures or scores (Wood et al., 2018). Owing this situation, Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar through Ministry of Education has created a conducive environment for student especially talented one. The ministry strengthened the examination management to ensure that those with higher grades are selected to join the talented school which most of them allocated in town areas.

Learning is a dynamic process and its outcome is more evident when it begins early in life and continues through adulthood (Heckman, 2000). The learning environment should be good with enough and safe physical space. It should also begin at an appropriate starting age. School remoteness has been a great hindrance to achieve this. To curb this problem many communities' lives in dispersed villages while the special talented secondary schools at Zanzibar were not built in search a way that they serve a number of villages.

In the context of Tanzania and Zanzibar, just like in other countries in Africa, the construction of special talented secondary schools did not pay attention to home school distance experienced by potential learners. The overlooked factor includes other related concerns like transport challenges, meals availability, study time and safety issues the learners are likely to face (Oneye & Onyango, 2021). Consequently, long distance to and from school has been a topic of interest to scholars in various countries such as Europe, America, Africa, as well as Tanzania in Zanzibar as the factor may affect students' academic progress and performance (Melack, 2014; World Bank, 2019). The problem occurs mostly in developing countries like Tanzania in which some of the students travel very long distance on foot or by bicycles to access education

(Human Right Watch, 2017). Thus, such situation hampers academic uprightness of students in special talented secondary schools at Zanzibar.

Despite the initiative made by the Republic Government of Zanzibar of building schools in every Urban being essential step in increasing access to special talented secondary schools' education to people of different areas in Zanzibar, the challenge of long-distance specifically to students from rural areas still exists. Rural areas are characterized by scattered settlements that make it very difficult to students access the urban talented secondary school's location easily (Oneye & Onyango, 2021). With this regard, numerous studies have shown that long-distance is an issue of concern since it affects students' learning which also affects their performance.

Through the special talented secondary school made the selected students to travel almost 32 kilometers from their home to school, by using public transports (daladala) or by non-motorized means of transport such as bicycles. The students from rural areas performance seems not good as most of them got low squares in form four and fail to continue with the studies as expected (Worrell et al., 2022). Therefore, there was need to make research to fill the gap by identifying the reasons for special talented secondary school remoteness in Urban district at Zanzibar, and eventually to recommend the strategies that can improve the special talented secondary school remoteness regarding student's academic performance in Urban District at Zanzibar.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical review

This study is centered and guided by social capital theory propounded by Robert Putnam in 1993. The main idea of social capital theory is that social networks and connections among individuals and groups within a society are valuable resources that can lead to positive outcomes such as trust, cooperation, and collective action.

Social capital theory refers to the notion that social networks, relationships, and norms can have a positive impact on individuals and communities. It suggests that having access to resources and support through social connections can lead to better

outcomes, such as improved health, education, and overall well-being. On the other hand, the impact of distance of students from home to school refers to the potential challenges and disadvantages that students may face when they have to travel long distances to attend school. There are several reasons why the social capital theory founded by Robert Putnam is most suitable for analyzing the relationship between distance from home to school and social capital. By mention just one, Putnam's social capital theory has been widely studied and accepted in the fields of sociology, political science, and education. This means that there is a wealth of research and evidence supporting its validity and applicability. By using this theory, we can draw upon existing literature and studies to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between distance from home to school and social capital.

In contrast, other theories may not be as directly relevant or well-established in the context of distance from home to school. For instance, conflict theory, which focuses on the unequal distribution of power and resources in society, may not fully explain the reason for special talented secondary school remoteness at Zanzibar as among of social capital. Similarly, social exchange theory, which focuses on the costs and rewards of social relationships, may not fully capture the complexities of social capital in the context of distance from home to school.

### **Empirical literature review**

Remoteness of the special talented education program and academic performance is not new phenomenon. Many studies have been conducted on the special talent education program. Some of those studies include "The Impact of Special Talent Program Schools on Academic Performance in Remote Areas by Smith (2017); "Examining the Effectiveness of Special Talent Programs in Improving Academic Achievement in Remote Schools" by Brown (2020); "The Influence of Special Talent Programs on Students' Motivation and Engagement in Learning in Remote Schools" by Kim (2020); "Intervention Strategies to Improve Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands in Kenya" by Katamei and Omwono (2015); "Factors

Affecting Students' Academic Performance: A case study in Agartala Municipal Council Area" by Amitava et al. (2010); "Can the Physical Environment Have an Impact on the Learning Environment: New York" by Lippmann (2010); "The Role of Parental Involvement in the Academic Performance of Students in Remote Schools with Special Talent Programs" by Hernandez (2017); "Middle-class children resentful at being pushed to succeed. Telegraph by Kirkup (2008); and "Special Talent Programs in Remote Schools: Challenges and Opportunities for Academic Success" by Thompson (2019). However, most of these studies did not thoroughly examine the reasons for special talented secondary school remoteness which later affects students' academic performance particularly in Zanzibar. This study aims to fill this existing gap by examining the reasons for special talented secondary schools' remoteness in Urban district at Zanzibar.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study used total number of 151 respondents who were selected from six (6) secondary schools in Urban district at Zanzibar, where 1 DEO, 6 head of schools, 36 teachers, 84 students and 24 parents were used. Simple random sampling techniques were used in selection of ordinary teachers and students while purposive sampling technique was used in selection of the head of schools, DEO and parents in the area of the study. In this study, questionnaire, documentary review, and interview were used as a data collection method whereby;

In the context of this study, the questionnaire method proved to be highly advantageous. It allowed the researcher to efficiently collect a substantial amount of data from a diverse group of teachers in the selected area. Conducting individual interviews with each respondent would have been a time-consuming and logistically challenging endeavor, given the number of participants involved. Moreover, using a structured questionnaire ensured that the data collected were consistent and could be easily analyzed, providing valuable insights into the problem under investigation. The questionnaire employed for teachers and students. Overall, the questionnaire method emerged as a pragmatic choice for data collection, enabling the research team to



gather comprehensive information while minimizing logistical complexities.

In this study also, the Semi-structured interview was preferred since it offer a unique advantage by striking a balance between predetermined questions and flexibility. Researcher employ a set of core questions while still having the freedom to explore unexpected areas and probe further into intriguing responses. This flexibility enables the acquisition of deeper insights, which may not be achievable through rigidly structured interviews or surveys. The interview employed for head of schools, DEO, and parents. Furthermore, the simplicity and ease of application of this method made it a practical choice, allowing for effective communication and rapport-building with the participants, ultimately enhancing the quality of the data collected.

Documentary review as a process of reading and critically analyzing documents is credited for providing researchers with information that can be reviewed repeatedly and at a convenient time to the researcher (Kothari, 2004). The documentary review is a method of data collection used to get secondary source of data. Secondary data involve data that have

already been collected and analyzed by someone else. This method was used to get information from the school academic office about the way school to home distance can contribute to set back academic performance of a student in their schools.

The collected quantitative data underwent a meticulous process of coding and analysis, facilitated by the powerful Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25, a widely utilized software known for its capabilities in data management and statistical analysis while the qualitative data were collected through open ended questions, interviews and documentary review. All the qualitative data collected were reviewed and categorized into themes and analyzed basing on research objectives.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings on determining the reasons for school remoteness among special talented secondary schools in Urban district at Zanzibar. Questionnaire towards ordinary teachers, interview with head of schools and DEO, and documentary reviews as tools of data collection were applied. Findings are presented in the table below;

**Table 1 Reasons for Special Talented Secondary Schools Remoteness in Zanzibar**

ITEM	A	N	D	T
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
Limited financial support	93 (62)	44 (29)	14 (9)	151 (100)
Nomadic life style	55 (36)	33 (22)	63 (42)	151 (100)
Community's negative attitudes towards education	80(53)	55(36)	16(11)	151 (100)
Lack of open spaces for constructions of schools	20 (13)	98 (65)	33 (22)	151 (100)
Geographical dispersion	74 (49)	47 (31)	30(20)	151 (100)
Unfriendly transport infrastructure	83 (55)	27 (18)	41 (27)	151 (100)

**Source:** Field Data (2024).

key

A = Agree

N = Neutral

D = Disagree

T = Total

(%) = Percentage

f = frequency

n = Number of respondents

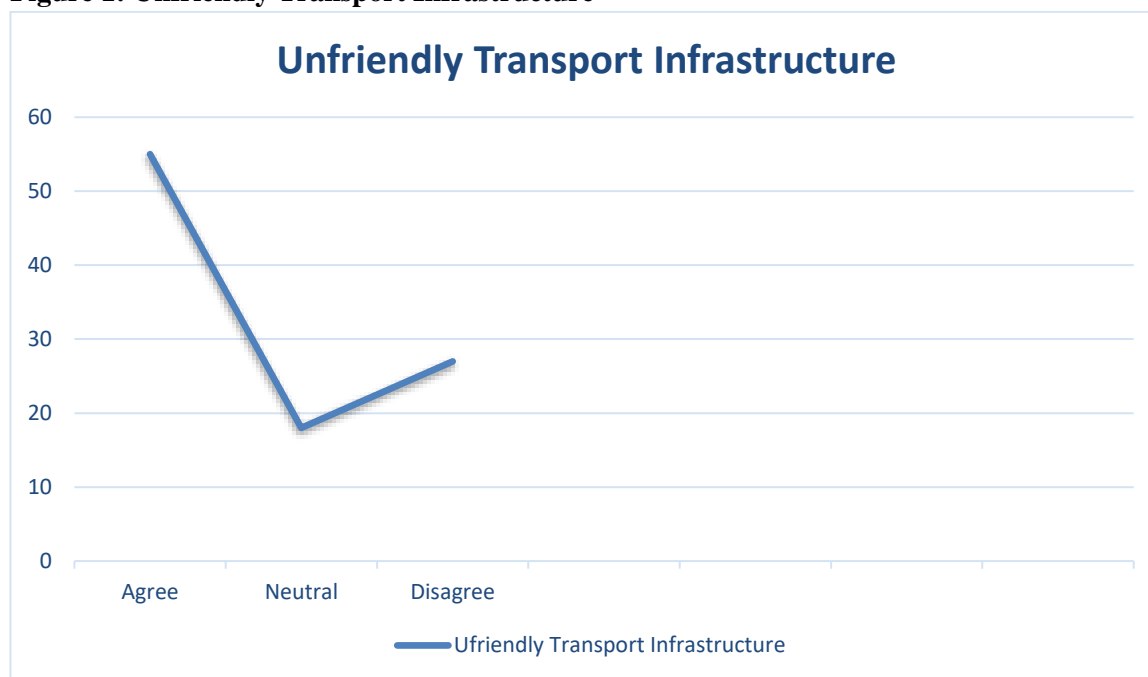
**Note:** The table 5.1 above shows responses from 151 respondents to whom questionnaire and interviews were administered during research conduction whereby the questionnaires administered to 120 respondents while 31 respondents were involved in semi -structured interview.

### Unfriendly Transport Infrastructure

The field data below revealed that out of 151 respondents, 83 (55%) respondents agreed the statement that unfriendly transport infrastructure contributes to hinder academic performance in special talented program schools in Urban district at Zanzibar, 27 (18%) respondents were neutral while 41 (27%) respondents said that they do not agree.

The meaning attached to these data was the reality that exists in parts of Zanzibar where special talented program schools are located far distant from the students' residential areas while the transport infrastructures are poor. Students have to walk on foot which becomes a barrier during the rain seasons when the foot paths and roads become flooded, humidly, muddy and sometimes blocked. Therefore, due to unfriendly transport pathways and the challenges which are associated with, students fail to positively stick to the studies consequently they perform poor in academics. The study findings were further represented in the line graph as indicated in figure (1);

**Figure 1: Unfriendly Transport Infrastructure**



**Source:** Field Data (2024)

The means of transport also becomes a problem since most of schools are built in Urban or town areas which have other strategic advantages that led to traffic Jam, missing morning class sessions due to lack of students' public transport. This obstructs students from performing better in these special talented schools in Urban district at Zanzibar.

The researcher when interviewing the heads of schools, parents and the district education officer, some of the respondents were heard complaining that;

*The remoteness of our schools is caused by the local government authorities, the leaders particularly the regional and district officers reallocate the constructions of special secondary schools in poor town areas instead of rural areas but the direction of transport infrastructures in such areas is not considered. Some of these areas were supposed to be a business areas or trading centers but schools have been constructed, teachers and students suffer to reach them daily (HM4).*

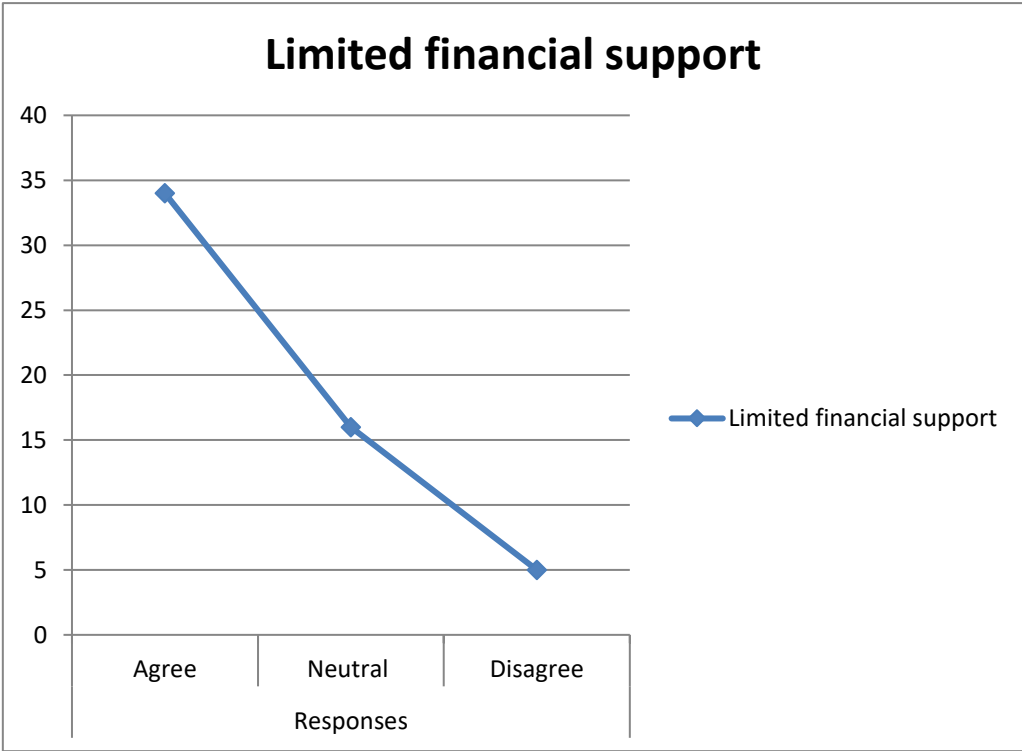
The finding from (HM4) indicates that, areas within these schools are found in town areas. This makes students to walk very long distance from rural areas to reach their schools, simply because there are no friendly infrastructures like bridges and roads constructed as shortcuts to school and there are no students' public transport allocated for these schools regarding the remoteness from their residential areas to their schools. Generally, this situation which students encounter, contributes a great deal to the academic drop among many of them.

**Limited Financial Support**

The field data indicate that out of 151 respondents, 94 (62) respondents agreed, 44(29) respondents were neutral while 14(9) respondents did not agree the limited financial support is the reason for special talented secondary schools' remoteness in Urban district at Zanzibar. This result indicates that, special

talented program school remoteness is an outcome of limited financial support from parents/guardians, communities and the government in general. Renzulli et al. (2013) in Tanzania suggested that, the main barrier to sending and maintaining children in school was financial and their inability to pay. They fail to build many special talented program schools in different parts where the communities live leading to some students walk very long distance to access the scarce of these secondary schools in remote Urban areas. A tendency of school be located far from students' homes has a setback towards their performance in academic arena. These results are in agreements with study by Rumberger et al. (2017) in Washington which showed that, limited financial supports affect the households to pay school fees and other costs associated with education. The data were further represented in the line graph (5.2);

**Figure 2: Limited Financial Support**



**Source: Field Data (2024)**

The interviewed respondents confirmed that, the limited financial support by saying that the decision makers are not prioritizing the constructions of special talented program schools at every district and in some new division and wards. The researcher quoted some of the respondents saying,

*The government has not seen the importance of building other special talented program schools in the new wards which have many inhabitants who are scatted; the children have to be enrolled in the neighboring division or district with special talented program schools which are very*

*far from their residential areas. Their parents do not care, they have built as many local beer shops as they can at every street but if you tell them to start building a single class to support their children, they neglect (AC2).*

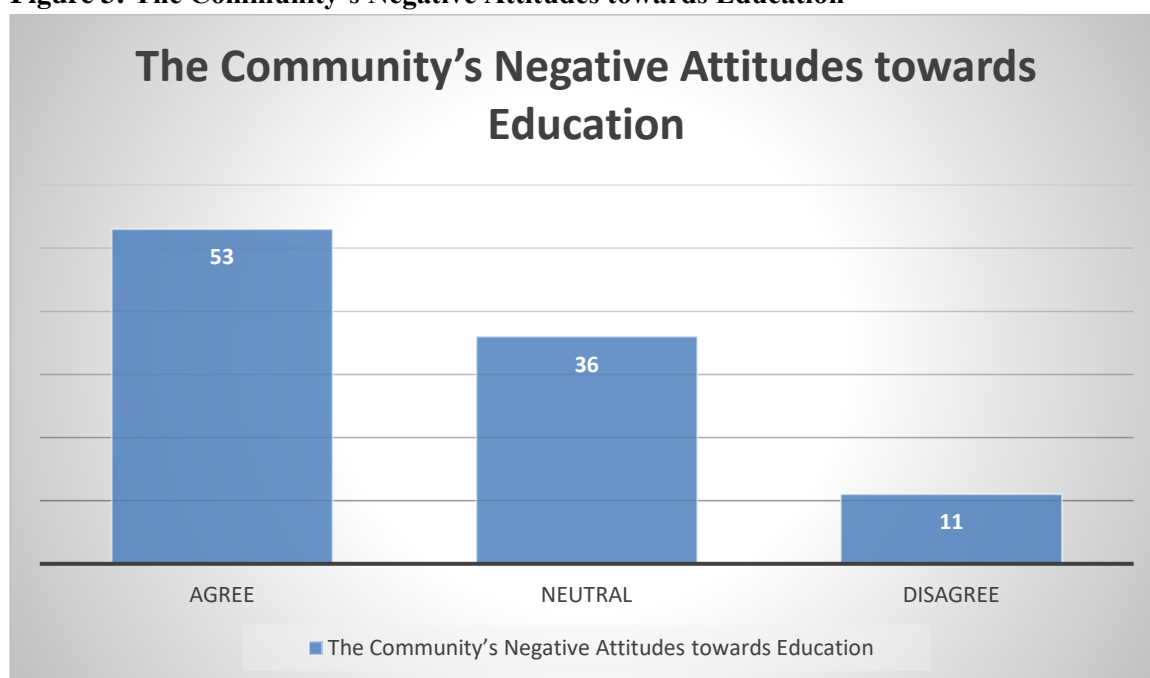
This is a real situation in most Zanzibar societies, Sheiya whose inhabitants are scattered are considered to be very large but with no special talented program schools. This leads children to suffer from walking very long distance to reach such limited special talented program schools in town areas as a result indicators for academic failure come into contact. The literature reviews also clarify the existence of this situation in some regions, for instance Human Right Watch (2017) argues that, remoteness in schools would be avoided if there is clear implementation of educational policies including those which insist on construction of educational infrastructures which will be not only easily accessible by every pupil or student but also will be properly located, allowing no barriers to such learners. Having observed the data from the field and the literature reviews, the study concluded that, the government and other educational stakeholders need to continue financing the constructions of other new special talented program schools in order to prevent

the remoteness of such schools in rural areas because the populations are growing and the residencies are expanding. By such government involvement in school building near settlement the academic development can be achieved in special talented program schools in Urban district at Zanzibar.

### **The Community's Negative Attitudes towards Education**

The field data indicated that out of 151 respondents, 80 (53%) respondents agreed the statement above, 55 (36%) respondents were neutral while 16 (11%) respondents did not agree the community's negative attitudes towards education is the reason for special talented secondary schools' remoteness in Urban district at Zanzibar. These study findings indicate that, cultural beliefs like preparation for adulthood for girls', and effective contribution of students to the future well-being of their families and society cause school remoteness since they fail to build special talented program schools in their areas. Furthermore, cultural beliefs of some parents/guardians in the surveyed area, make them believe once they involve their children in their economic activities will get high returns, and thus lead into school remoteness. The data were further represented in the bar graph below;

**Figure 3: The Community's Negative Attitudes towards Education**



**Source:** Field Data (2024)



These data reveal that, in most communities, education is not their priority; people are busy with other social, cultural and economic activities. Some societies prioritize work before schooling; it is not a surprise to see children who were supposed to be in special talented program schools roaming in the streets helping their parents to perform different economic activities including farming and fishing. Community members are likely to pay attention to contribute much of their incomes for ceremonies and marriages but not for education infrastructures for the future of their children (Human Right Watch, 2017). This has contributed a lot to academic slowdown among many secondary students in the area under this study. It is this priority which causes the remoteness of special talented program schools in most affected areas. Parents neither value the importance of special talented secondary schools in their localities nor do they care about the absence of such schools in their localities leading their children to walk very long distance to reach the scarce secondary schools (Melack, 2014). Conclusively, the attitude of the community about education has an impact towards academic performance of students in special talented secondary schools which are located in urban or town area. In case the community has positive perception over education, the performance of academic affairs in special talented secondary schools is expected to be better than its vice versa.

## CONCLUSION

As it has been understood that education is imperative for leading to overall progress of the individuals, communities and nation. In order to attain educational qualifications and to enhance one's skills and abilities, it is vital to do well academically and obtain good grades. There are number of factors within school as well as outside school that affects the academic performance of the students. One of the reasons is school remoteness among special talented secondary schools at Urban District Council in Zanzibar as the study found. In this perspective, it is necessary that in order to achieve good academic outcomes, more efforts should be taken by various education stakeholders in reducing the distance of special talented secondary school location. This will play important roles in improving students' academic performance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS /SUGGESTIONS

**Clear Policies on School Location;** Out of 151 respondents, 88 (58%) respondents agreed on the recommendation about the creation of clear policies and their implementations, would help to improve the students' academic performance. These results indicate that, policymakers such as LGAs should ensure students are not schooling outside of their wards in order to avoid transportation problems. Furthermore, special talented secondary schools should collaborate with public bus operators to transport students from the schools to different directions. Such away can ensure there are official buses that can be arranged to pass specific routes in different locations to carry students to and from schools.

The Government may open up more special talented secondary schools as to reduce school remoteness. This will make teaching and learning comfortable for both teachers and students. Furthermore, this will improve teachers' confidence in teaching hence effective delivery of materials in classrooms as well as improve students' academic performances.

Government should provide education to the public on the importance of contributing funds in building special talented schools at their communities in order to address the problem of school remoteness faced by their children on their education learning.

**Provision of Transport Facilities.** The data from the field reveal that out of 151 respondents, 113 (75%) respondents agreed that provision of transport facilities in remote special talented secondary schools would help the students to improve their academic performance, 24 (16%) respondents were neutral while 14 (9%) did not agree that provision of transport facilities in remote special talented secondary schools would help the students to improve their academic performance. This finding reveals that transport facilities are among the good strategies for performance improvements since large number of respondents agreed the mentioned recommendation.

**The construction of hostels;** The study findings revealed that the construction of hostels would be of great advantages towards the improvement of students' academic performance. These results indicate that, through construction of hostels or near

accommodations students will be able to pursue formal education away from their homes and thus improve their academic performances since they face less consequences of school remoteness. This help students learn to live with different types of individuals and increases the students' level of patience. Furthermore, students who live on hostels compared to those who lived off hostels are more likely to be involved in hostels programmes and to take part in extracurricular activities, which play important roles on their academic achievements.

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