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Community Satisfaction with Classroom Construction: Force Account versus Traditional Contracting in Malinyi District, Tanzania

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Abstract
Community satisfaction plays a critical role in sustaining rural public-school infrastructure by shaping local ownership, participation and long-term maintenance. This study compared community satisfaction with classroom construction projects implemented through Force Account (FA) and Traditional Contracting (TC) in Malinyi District, Tanzania. Using a cross-sectional mixed-methods design, data was collected from 384 respondents using a three-point Likert scale (not satisfied, neutral, satisfied) and six focus group discussions involving 48 participants. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's chi-square tests, with Cramer's V assessing association strength. Qualitative data was analysed thematically. The results show statistically significant differences across all indicators of community involvement and socioeconomic benefits. Respondents reported higher satisfaction under FA regarding participation in planning and implementation, job creation, wage fairness and timeliness, local business support and skills development. Qualitative findings corroborate these results, highlighting greater transparency, local ownership and capacity building under FA than TC. The study concludes that construction delivery approaches shape not only technical outcomes but also community experiences and perceived benefits. It recommends strengthening participatory, locally embedded practices in classroom construction while selectively integrating technical efficiencies from Traditional Contracting.

Keywords: Force Account; traditional contracting; community satisfaction; socioeconomic benefits.

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Introduction
School infrastructure is central to expanding access to quality education and strengthening long-term human capital development (Ansari et al., 2022). In many low- and middle-income countries, rapid population growth has intensified the demand for classrooms and related facilities. However, school construction programs often face cost overruns, delays, inconsistent workmanship and low stakeholder satisfaction, undermining project effectiveness and sustainability (Amoah et al.,

2021). Beyond technical performance, community perceptions and experiences of construction processes are increasingly recognized as critical to infrastructure sustainability (Mansuri & Rao, 2013).

In Tanzania, public-school classrooms are mainly delivered through Traditional Contracting (TC) and Force Account (FA). TC relies on formal procurement, professional design and external contractors, offering technical capacity and standardized procedures but often associated with higher costs, delays and limited community engagement (Consultants, 2023). By contrast, FA, strengthened after the 2016/17 financial year, entails direct implementation by government authorities, using local labour and materials. FA is widely adopted in rural areas due to its perceived cost-effectiveness, faster delivery and stronger emphasis on community involvement and local ownership (National Audit Office of Tanzania, 2021; Matto, 2021).

Malinyi District in Morogoro Region provides a relevant case for examining these approaches. District records show that 687 classrooms, 468 in primary and 219 in secondary schools, have been constructed using both FA and TC, with 104 additional projects planned for the 2024/25 financial year (Malinyi District Council, 2024). Despite this investment, systematic evidence on how delivery methods relate to community satisfaction in Malinyi remains limited. Existing studies largely focused on technical indicators, such as cost, time and quality, or examine community engagement within a single construction approach (Carpenter, 2014; Matto, 2021; Duthilleul et al., 2021; Gashi & Ivezaj, 2023), leaving limited comparative evidence on how different delivery approaches shape community involvement and perceived benefits. This study addressed this gap by comparing community satisfaction with classroom construction projects implemented through FA and TC in Malinyi District.

Theoretical Literature Review

This study was guided by Stakeholder Theory and Social Exchange Theory, which together provide a complementary framework for understanding how construction delivery approaches shape community satisfaction.

Stakeholder Theory, as articulated by Freeman (1984), posits that project success depends on the identification, engagement and management of all stakeholders affected. In the context of public-school classroom construction, stakeholders extend beyond government agencies and contractors to include parents, teachers, school committees, local leaders, artisans and surrounding communities. The theory suggests that projects which actively involve these actors in decision-making and implementation processes are more likely to achieve legitimacy, trust and sustained support. In this study, Stakeholder Theory provides a lens for examining how the differing participatory structures embedded in FA and TC approaches shape community satisfaction with involvement in classroom construction.

Social Exchange Theory, developed by Blau (1964), conceptualizes social interactions as exchanges in which individuals evaluate participation based on perceived rewards relative to costs. In infrastructure projects, these rewards may be tangible, such as employment opportunities, income and skills acquisition or intangible, including transparency, recognition and a sense of ownership. Communities are more likely to express satisfaction when perceived benefits outweigh the social and economic costs of participation. In the context of this study, the theory helps explain why differences in employment opportunities, wage practices, local procurement and skills development between FA and TC approaches are expected to translate into differing levels of community satisfaction.

Taken together, these theories provide a coherent analytical lens for this study. Stakeholder Theory informs Research Question 1 by explaining how differences in participatory structures between FA and TC influence satisfaction with involvement in planning and implementation. Social Exchange Theory underpins Research Question 2 by explaining how variations in employment, wages, business opportunities and skills development shape satisfaction with socioeconomic benefits.

Empirical Literature Review

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that community participation in infrastructure planning and implementation enhances satisfaction by improving transparency, accountability and alignment with local needs. Rijal (2023) found that inclusive planning processes increased project acceptability and community trust by allowing local priorities to shape implementation decisions. Similarly, Bereketi (2023) reported that strong community attachment and active involvement in infrastructure projects were associated with higher

satisfaction and collective responsibility for project outcomes. Evidence from Tanzania reinforces these findings. Malipula (2024) observed that community participation in secondary school construction improved monitoring and reduced conflicts, leading to stronger ownership and perceived project success. These studies suggest that participation is not merely procedural but substantively shapes how communities evaluate infrastructure interventions.

Beyond participation, socioeconomic benefits generated during infrastructure construction are a critical determinant of community satisfaction. Littleton et al. (2023) argued that school construction can stimulate local economies through temporary employment, procurement of materials and increased local spending. These benefits enhance household incomes and strengthen community support for public investments.

Empirical evidence from East Africa and comparable contexts highlights the importance of employment and skills development. Kamau et al. (2021) found that job creation and skills acquisition associated with school construction projects in Somaliland fostered community pride and long-term support for educational infrastructure. Similarly, the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment conducted by the Open University of Tanzania (Open University of Tanzania, 2024) in Morogoro Region emphasized that prioritising local labor and suppliers reduces poverty and enhances skills transfer, thereby strengthening community satisfaction and sustainability.

Overall, while existing empirical studies demonstrate that community involvement and socioeconomic benefits are central to satisfaction with infrastructure projects, they largely examine these dynamics within single delivery models. Comparative evidence on how FA and TC differentially structure participation and distribute socioeconomic benefits remains limited. This study addresses this gap by providing a systematic comparison of community satisfaction across the two construction approaches.

Methodology

This section describes the research design, study area, population and sampling procedures, data collection instruments, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations employed to examine community satisfaction with classroom construction projects implemented through FA and TC approaches in Malinyi District, Tanzania.

Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative household survey data with qualitative focus group discussions (FGDs). This design was appropriate for capturing community perceptions, experiences and satisfaction with classroom construction projects at a single point in time. The quantitative component enabled systematic comparison of satisfaction levels between FA and TC projects while the qualitative component provided contextual insights into the processes and experiences underlying observed patterns.

Population and Sampling

The study was conducted in Malinyi District and targeted households located within the catchment areas of public schools where classroom construction had been implemented using either FA or TC approaches. Catchment areas were selected because residents are the primary beneficiaries and are most directly exposed to construction processes and outcomes.

For the quantitative component, a sample size of 384 households was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for large or unknown populations, based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error ($p = 0.5$). Proportional allocation yielded 210 households from FA project areas and 174 households from TC project areas. Within each catchment area, households were selected using systematic random sampling and one adult household head or a knowledgeable household representative, defined as an adult familiar with local school construction activities, was interviewed per household. For the qualitative component, six FGDs were conducted: three in FA project areas and three in TC project areas. Each FGD involved 6–10 purposively selected participants, including local leaders, construction workers, school committee members and local vendors, resulting in a total of 48 participants. This purposive selection ensured the inclusion of individuals with direct experience of the construction processes.

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire with three-point Likert-scale items (not satisfied, neutral, satisfied) measuring community satisfaction in two domains: participation in planning and implementation, and socioeconomic benefits. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured FGDs exploring

participants' experiences of participation, decision-making, employment, income, and skills. FGDs were moderated, audio-recorded with consent, and supported by field notes.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, with Pearson's chi-square and Cramer's V assessing differences and effect size. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify key themes on participation, transparency, employment, socioeconomic benefits, and skills development.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was ensured through literature review and expert consultation, while construct validity was strengthened by aligning items with research questions. Qualitative credibility was enhanced through triangulation and member checking. Transferability was supported by detailed contextual descriptions. Reliability was improved through pre-testing with 20 respondents, and standardized procedures ensured consistency and minimized errors.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Malinyi District Executive Director. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all respondents after a clear explanation of the study's purpose. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured by excluding personal identifiers from data and reporting findings in aggregate form.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses community satisfaction with classroom construction projects implemented through FA and TC approaches in Malinyi District.

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Table 1 presents a summary of socioeconomic characteristics of the 384 participating households, including gender, age, residence duration, distance from the school and education level.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Surveyed Households (N = 384)

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Female	149	38.8
	Male	235	61.2
Age (years)	≤ 18	82	21.4
	18–39	79	20.6
	40–59	156	40.6
	60+	67	17.4
Time lived in community (years)	≤ 5	35	9.1
	6–10	100	26.0
	> 10	249	64.9
Distance from school (km)	≤ 2	325	84.6
	3–5	54	14.1
	> 5	5	1.3
Education level	No formal education	16	4.2
	Primary	104	27.1
	Secondary	162	42.2
	Vocational/College	102	26.6

Most respondents were male (61.2%), reflecting a gendered participation pattern that may influence project engagement. Adults aged 40–59 years dominated (40.6%), suggesting mature, economically active members are key decision-makers.

A significant proportion (64.9%) had lived in the community for more than ten years, indicating strong community attachment and potential for sustained involvement. Most respondents (84.6%) resided within 2 km of the school, facilitating active engagement. Education levels were relatively high, with 42.2% holding secondary education and 26.6% vocational/college qualifications, likely supporting effective participation and oversight.

Participation and Implementation Satisfaction

Guided by Stakeholder Theory, this subsection examined how differences in participatory structures between FA and TC influence satisfaction with involvement in planning and implementation? The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows consistently higher satisfaction under FA across all indicators. Over 88% of respondents were satisfied with involvement under FA while TC recorded lower satisfaction, especially during implementation. Notably, 52.8% under TC reported not being satisfied with implementation involvement, compared to only 1.4% under FA.

Table 2: Community Satisfaction with Participation in Planning and Implementation

Indicator	Method	Not Satisfied n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Satisfied n (%)	Total
Information before construction	FA	1 (0.7)	8 (3.6)	201 (95.7)	210
	TC	31 (18.0)	10 (5.6)	133 (76.4)	174
Opportunity to attend meetings	FA	4 (2.1)	11 (5.1)	195 (92.9)	210
	TC	33 (19.4)	22 (12.5)	119 (68.1)	174
Inputs considered during planning	FA	1 (0.7)	23 (10.9)	186 (88.6)	210
	TC	12 (6.9)	68 (38.9)	94 (54.2)	174
Involvement during implementation	FA	2 (1.4)	21 (10.2)	187 (88.4)	210
	TC	92 (52.8)	41 (23.6)	41 (23.6)	174

Table 3: Association between Construction Approach and Participation Satisfaction

Indicator	χ^2	df	p-value	Cramer's V
Information before construction	39.16	2	< 0.001	0.32
Opportunity to attend meetings	41.78	2	< 0.001	0.33
Inputs considered during planning	58.93	2	< 0.001	0.39
Implementation involvement	184.36	2	< 0.001	0.69

These patterns suggest marked differences in perceived inclusiveness and engagement between the two delivery approaches. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies, where participatory and community-driven approaches were found to enhance transparency, accountability and satisfaction compared to contractor-led models (Mansuri & Rao, 2013; Kamau et al., 2021; Malipula, 2024). These studies emphasize that when communities are actively involved in decision-making and implementation, they develop a stronger sense of ownership and trust in project outcomes.

Approaches and Participation Associations

In Table 3, Pearson's chi-square test was conducted. The null hypothesis (H_{01}) states that there is no significant association between construction approach (Force Account vs Traditional Contracting) and community satisfaction with involvement in planning and implementation.

All associations between construction approach and satisfaction with involvement in planning and implementation are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the observed differences between FA and TC are highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. This provides strong statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H_{01}) that there is no significant association between construction approach (Force Account vs Traditional Contracting) and community satisfaction with involvement in planning and implementation. Moderate associations are observed for information provision, meeting participation and consideration of community inputs (Cramer's V = 0.32–0.39). This interpretation follows conventional thresholds, where Cramer's V values of approximately 0.10 indicate weak association, 0.30 indicate moderate association and values above 0.50 indicate strong association, suggesting meaningful but not overwhelming differences between the two approaches.

A particularly strong association is evident for involvement during implementation (Cramer's V = 0.69), indicating a pronounced divergence between FA and TC projects and highlighting implementation as the phase where delivery approach matters most for community satisfaction This finding is consistent with existing literature showing that implementation phases often determine the extent of community engagement and satisfaction, as they involve direct interaction with project activities and resource allocation (Mansuri & Rao, 2013; Duthilleul

et al., 2021). Projects that actively involve communities during implementation tend to foster greater ownership, transparency and trust.

Qualitative Insights on Participation and Engagement

FGD findings corroborate the survey results and provide insight into the mechanisms underlying these differences. Participants in FA project areas described frequent meetings, transparent communication and direct involvement in planning and oversight, whereas participants in TC areas reported limited engagement confined mainly to logistical support. It was commented that "With Force Account, our youth were employed, and we could monitor the work directly" (FGD participant, Sofi Mission village). Another respondent added, "In contractor projects, decisions were made outside our village and we only helped with materials" (FGD participant, Usangule 'A' village).

School committee members from FA sites also reported timely communication and inclusion in decision-making: "We were called for meetings, our ideas were heard and we were told how money was spent" (FGD participant, Itete Minazini Village). These qualitative insights confirm that FA fosters participatory and transparent processes while TC tends to exclude the community from meaningful engagement. The qualitative findings reinforce the survey results by illustrating how institutional arrangements under FA enable meaningful community engagement. Consistent with Stakeholder Theory, FA projects create spaces for information sharing, consultation and accountability through regular meetings and transparent financial reporting, which strengthens perceived legitimacy and ownership (Freeman, 1984; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). In contrast, TC projects concentrate decision-making authority among external actors, limiting community influence and reducing satisfaction with involvement. These findings suggest that participation is not merely symbolic but shaped by the governance structure embedded within the construction approach.

Satisfaction with Socioeconomic Benefits

Beyond participation, community satisfaction is shaped by the socioeconomic benefits generated during classroom construction. Guided by Social Exchange Theory, this subsection addresses Research Question 2 stating how variations in employment, wages, business opportunities and skills development shape satisfaction with socioeconomic benefits. Descriptive results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Community Satisfaction with Socioeconomic Benefits (%)

Indicator	Method	Not Satisfied n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Satisfied n (%)	Total
Job creation	FA	1 (0.7)	9 (4.3)	200 (95.0)	210
	TC	39 (22.3)	58 (33.3)	77 (44.4)	174
Wages fair & prompt	FA	20 (9.4)	35 (16.7)	155 (73.8)	210
	TC	17 (9.7)	85 (48.6)	72 (41.4)	174
Local business support	FA	20 (9.4)	35 (16.7)	155 (73.8)	210
	TC	17 (9.7)	85 (48.6)	72 (41.4)	174
Skills development	FA	1 (0.7)	44 (21.0)	165 (78.3)	210
	TC	44 (25.0)	78 (44.4)	52 (29.9)	174

Table 4 indicates substantially higher satisfaction with socioeconomic benefits under FA across all indicators. FA projects show very high satisfaction with job creation (95.0%) and skills development (78.3%) whereas TC projects are characterized by higher levels of dissatisfaction and neutrality, particularly for job creation and skills development. These patterns suggest unequal distribution of construction-related benefits between the two approaches. Pearson's Chi-square test was conducted. The null hypothesis (H_{o2}) states that there is no significant association between construction approach and community satisfaction with socioeconomic benefits. The results are presented in Table 5. All associations between construction approach and satisfaction with socioeconomic benefits are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, providing evidence that differences in satisfaction levels across FA and TC projects are not by chance.

Table 5: Association between Construction Approach and Socioeconomic Benefits

Indicator	χ^2	df	p-value	Cramer's V
Job creation	142.67	2	< 0.001	0.61
Wages fair & prompt	61.24	2	< 0.001	0.40
Local business support	61.24	2	< 0.001	0.40
Skills development	116.83	2	< 0.001	0.55

Notes: Pearson chi-square tests; *N* = 384. Cramer's V values of 0.10 = small, 0.30 = moderate, ≥0.50 = strong association

These results do not support the null hypothesis (H_{o2}) stating that there is no significant association between construction approach and community satisfaction with socioeconomic benefits. Stronger associations are observed for job creation (Cramer's V = 0.61) and skills development (Cramer's V = 0.55) while moderate associations are evident for wage fairness and support to local businesses (Cramer's V = 0.40).

Given that all p-values are less than 0.001, the null hypothesis (H_{o2}) is rejected. This indicates that construction approach significantly influences community satisfaction with socioeconomic benefits. These findings are consistent with previous studies which show that infrastructure projects that prioritize local labor, fair wages and local procurement generate greater community satisfaction and economic benefits (Littleton et al., 2023; Kamau et al., 2021). Such approaches enhance income opportunities and strengthen local economies, thereby increasing community support for public investments.

Qualitative Insights on Socioeconomic Benefits

Qualitative evidence provides further explanation for these results. Participants consistently reported that FA projects prioritized local labor and procurement, thereby creating employment opportunities, improving household incomes and supporting local businesses. In line with Social Exchange Theory, these tangible benefits increased the perceived rewards of participation and fostered positive attitudes toward FA projects. It was reported that FA projects created significantly more local employment opportunities, particularly for young people, which helped improve household incomes: "Many youths from our village got work in Force Account projects. It helped them earn and support their families." (FGD participant, Njiwa village). Participants reported also that FA ensured prompt and fair wage payments while TC projects often delayed payments or offered lower rates, leading to frustration among workers: "We were paid on time and fairly. In contractor projects, payments were delayed or unfair" (FGD participant, Malinyi Village).

FA projects not only provided jobs but also helped workers gain valuable skills in construction trades while boosting local businesses by sourcing materials locally: "We learned masonry and carpentry techniques. These skills are useful for other projects and future jobs." (FGD participant, Ihowanja Village). Another participant reported, "Local shops supplying sand, bricks and timber were given preference. This helped our businesses grow" (FGD participant, Tanga Village).

These insights closely corroborate the survey results, demonstrating that FA projects extend beyond short-term employment and income generation to build local skills, capacity and more resilient rural livelihoods. In contrast, TC projects tend to deliver narrower and more temporary benefits. Consistent with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), the greater and more sustained tangible benefits associated with FA increase the perceived rewards of participation, fostering more positive community attitudes and higher satisfaction.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concludes that Force Account projects yield higher satisfaction than Traditional Contracting due to greater participation, better information sharing and stronger community engagement. They also deliver superior socioeconomic benefits, including local employment, fair wages, support to businesses and skills development. The study recommends enhancing structured community participation, especially under Traditional Contracting, through early consultation, regular communication, and formal representation. It further calls for prioritizing local labor, suppliers, and skills transfer, and selectively scaling up Force Account practices while retaining key efficiencies from Traditional Contracting.

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