



# **Basic Education and Its Impact for Career Development Goals among Adult Learners' in Tanzania**

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the impact of basic education attainment for career development among adult learners' in Rukwa region, Tanzania, revealing the academic performance of adult learners in basic education in Tanzania, and exploring the influence of adult academic performance for their career development goals in Tanzania. Andragogy and Social cognitive career theory applied. The study employed mixed methods and used a correlational design for the quantitative component. The target population was 506 respondents. The study used a sample of 230 respondents. The adult learners were randomly selected while adult Learning center coordinators were purposively sampled from Rukwa region adult learning center included in the study. The data were collected

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through Questionnaire administration with predominantly closed-ended questions conducted to 222 adult learners. In-depth interviews were conducted with an interview guide to 8 adult learning center coordinators and a documentary analysis. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics in terms of percentages and frequencies with the aid of IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences v26. Thematic analysis was also conducted for qualitative data. The findings revealed that most of the adult learners have career goals that require a basic education. Despite such needs, adult learners have poor academic performance, which does not support their career development goals. The study concludes that adult learners enroll in basic education programs with the aspiration to enhance their academic qualifications and unlock better opportunities, the disappointing outcomes point to systemic issues within the education framework. The study suggests that the government should develop a digital monitoring system to streamline adult education programmes, emphasis should be placed on special curriculum development for adult basic education, improving teaching methodologies, providing learner-centric resources, and ensuring that the programs are both accessible and relevant to the learners' career aspirations. Further studies be developed on an integrated curriculum for adult learners in basic education.

**Keywords:** *Basic education; career goals; adult learners; academic performance; andragogy.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globally adult basic education has gained international recognition as a vital element of sustainable development and lifelong learning (Benavot & Williams, 2023; Kuzior et al., 2023;). The World Bank, OECD, and UNESCO are among the organizations that highlight the importance of adult education in lowering poverty, improving employment, and promoting social inclusion. One of the main forces behind the growth of human capital is basic education. According to UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2022), adult literacy and numeracy abilities have a major impact on increased productivity, economic expansion, and the fight against poverty. Higher literacy rates are frequently associated with better economic outcomes and less income inequality worldwide. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for everyone, depends heavily on basic education (Reimers, 2024; Zickafoose et al., 2024). Because it improves employability and job preparation, adult education is also closely related to SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth)

Empirical studies indicate that adult learners who complete basic education programs generally earn higher salaries than those who do not, largely due to acquiring in-demand skills and knowledge (Antoninis et al., 2023). Such programs enhance job prospects, as employers favour candidates with verified qualifications, thereby improving resumes and competitiveness. Completing these programs often leads to promotions, as organizations prioritize internal

candidates with advanced qualifications for leadership roles (Schmidt & Biniecki, 2023). Additionally, adult learners gain practical skills that enhance job performance, making them valuable to employers (Bellare et al., 2023). This education boosts self-confidence and job satisfaction, reducing turnover rates and fostering a positive work environment (De Matas & Keegan, 2020). Furthermore, adult learners are better equipped to adapt to workplace changes, which is vital in fast-evolving (Brunello et al., 2024). As more adults pursue education, the overall skill level of the workforce improves, benefiting economic growth (UNESCO, 2022).

Consistent attendance and active participation in adult education are crucial for mastering skills and knowledge, which are vital for job performance and career growth (OECD, 2020). Engaging regularly in classes fosters connections with instructors and peers, creating professional networks that can provide job referrals, mentorship, and collaborative opportunities (Dimmitt, 2021). Their satisfaction with education positively impacts their workplace attitudes, enhancing commitment and reducing turnover (UNESCO, 2022). Ultimately, engaged learners can positively influence workplace culture through their dedication to ongoing development (Bellare et al., 2023). Acquiring relevant skills significantly boosts the employability of adult learners, as employers prioritize candidates who meet specific skill requirements (Baker-Ericzén et al., 2022). Skilled individuals often receive higher salaries, with research indicating that new skills can lead to wage increases and greater economic stability (Bellare et al., 2023). Skill development is also

linked to career advancement, making employees more likely to be promoted (Schmidt & Biniecki, 2023). Adult learners report enhanced job satisfaction and motivation due to increased competence (Urban & Jirsáková, 2022). In a rapidly evolving job market, the ability to adapt through skill acquisition is essential for long-term career relevance (Napierala & Kvetan, 2023).

Additionally, these skills empower learners to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, fostering economic growth (Kabung'a, 2023). Collaborative learning environments facilitate professional networking, leading to job opportunities and mentorship (UNESCO, 2022). Moreover, skill acquisition boosts self-confidence, encouraging individuals to explore new career paths or tackle challenging roles (Giles-Mathis, 2023). Additionally, the connection between educational attainment and career development is not straightforward. It is shaped by various intervening factors, such as motivation, support systems, and labour market conditions, which influence how adult learners utilize their educational experiences in the workplace (Johnson, 2023). Grasping these dynamics is vital for policymakers and educators who seek to create effective adult education programs that not only enhance learning but also facilitate meaningful career transitions. The shift from education to a career can be challenging, particularly for adult learners who may have been away from formal education for a long time. Research shows that completing basic education can enhance job prospects, increase earnings, and improve job satisfaction since adult learners are empowered to upskill or reskill, enhancing their employability and contributing to the socio-economic development of their nations (Jones, 2023). However, the degree to which these outcomes are achieved often depends on individual situations and external influences.

European countries such as Germany, Sweden, and Denmark have established strong lifelong learning systems that integrate adult education with skills training, fostering career development. (Espinoza & Martinez-Yarza, 2023; Kuzior et al., 2023; Li, 2023). For instance, the "Volkshochschule" model in Germany offers adult learners' courses that are adapted to the needs of the job market (OECD, 2023). However, the stigma associated with adult education in the UK, particularly among older populations, deters people from taking part in lifelong learning programs (OECD, 2023; Wulff & Lassen, 2024). In Germany, bureaucratic obstacles and

language barriers also make it difficult for adult learners to access programs (OECD, 2023; Thomas et al., 2024). There has been a worldwide debate on the impact of adult learners' attainment of basic education on career development. For instance, in England, the National Skills Fund integrates the National Retraining Scheme, Career Learning Pilots, and the Flexible Learning Fund to guide the future design of skill provision. Currently, many low-skilled adults and their employers lack the motivation to pursue learning opportunities (OECD, 2020). In Slovakia, the choices made within the educational system appear to impact its effectiveness in preparing individuals for professional life and lifelong learning. Maintaining employment and career development is closely linked to lifelong learning, with employers playing a key role in ongoing professional development (Kilag et al., 2024).

In North America, online and blended learning models are increasingly used to provide flexible education opportunities for adults balancing work and study (World Bank, 2022). However, due to frequently inadequate funding for such programs, adult education access in North America is restricted in rural and economically disadvantaged regions (National Coalition for Literacy, 2022).

Countries like South Korea and Singapore emphasize skills-based adult education, aligning programs with high-demand sectors such as technology and manufacturing (Díaz et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2022). In South Korea, (Sabanal, 2023) argue that promoting self-directed learning and career decision-making self-efficacy is essential for enhancing the career adaptability of adult learners. However, there is limited literature on the impact of adult learners' attainment of basic education on career development. In India and Bangladesh, mobile learning initiatives are used to provide literacy and vocational training, improving access to education for rural and underserved populations (Bhuiyan & Mollik, 2023; UNICEF, 2023). However, in India, adult education programs frequently neglect to incorporate vocational training into basic education, depriving students of employable skills (World Bank, 2022). By combining basic education with community development initiatives, adult education programs in nations like Brazil and Mexico aim to lessen educational inequities (Daú et al., 2023).

Adult education in Africa serves as a response to socio-economic challenges such as poverty,

illiteracy, and unemployment. Across the continent, adult learners often pursue education to enhance career prospects, improve livelihoods, and address gaps in formal schooling (McKay, 2023; MOLEMA, 2022; Zickafoose et al., 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa, adult education programs often focus on functional literacy, vocational training, and community empowerment. Such initiatives are aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which emphasizes the role of education in achieving sustainable development (Cole, 2023; Tanyu, 2024). According to a study by Oxenham (2024), basic education-acquired literacy and numeracy abilities are directly associated with more employment options and higher wages, particularly in rural areas. For example, in South Africa, the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) program has significantly improved the employability of adult learners by integrating literacy education with vocational training (Dithale & van den Berg, 2024; McKay, 2023). Research shows that ABET participants in South Africa are more likely to secure formal employment compared to their non-literate peers. While the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) initiative has made progress in South Africa, issues like outdated teaching materials and insufficient teacher training hinder its effectiveness (Akintolu et al., 2023; Akintolu et al., 2022; Daniels, 2023).

In Uganda Literacy programs under the Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) initiative have enabled adults to improve their livelihoods through enhanced entrepreneurial skills (Rogers & Gizaw, 2022), while giving access to adult education in Uganda, often face overcrowded classrooms and insufficient resources in refugee settlements (Mugerwa-Sekawabe, 2022; UNESCO, 2022). In Kenya the introduction of mobile learning platforms in adult education programs has improved access to basic education for adults in remote areas, enhancing their career prospects (Mwololo, 2020; Gakuru, 2022; Otieno et al., 2023). Adult learners in Sub-Saharan African nations (such as Kenya and Malawi) are unable to take advantage of online and blended learning programs due to low internet penetration and limited access to digital devices (Flam et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2022). (Bako, 2022) contends that in Nigeria, there is a notable disparity in the performance of adult learners before and after they acquire the basic skills provided by the adult basic literacy program. Nevertheless, in African countries, literature lacked clarification on the impact of

adult learners' attainment of basic education on career development. Additionally, according to Brown (2022) and (Katete)2023, several socioeconomic problems, linguistic barriers, and cultural barriers are intertwined with the adult education contexts of African countries. Despite this complex tapestry, education continues to play a crucial role in fostering both individual and societal development.

In Tanzania, the Tanzanian government has implemented policies to support adult education, including the Education and Training Policy (URT, 1995). This policy underscores the importance of basic education in achieving national development goals and caters to the number of children would enter adulthood as illiteracy. The Tanzanian government has launched several adult learning programs, including ICBAE, COBET, IPPE, and Open and Distance Learning Secondary Education (Kahangwa; Mwachande, 2022; Sarafina, 2022). These programs in Tanzania have all focused-on career development objectives. For instance, ICBAE Since its inception in 1993, the program has equipped Tanzanian adult learners with fundamental literacy and numeracy skills, allowing them to participate in activities that generate revenue (Ng'umbi, 2022). Furthermore, international partners like DVV International and non-governmental organizations like the Tanzania Adult Education Association (TAEA) have been instrumental in the execution of adult education initiatives. To guarantee that students gain useful skills pertinent to regional labour markets, these organizations concentrate on combining vocational training with basic education (Kweka, 2021). The study by (Benavot & Williams, 2023) and Brown (2022) in Tanzania argue that adult education opens doors to unrealised potential. It enables people to learn new skills, widen their perspectives, and explore interests. Also, Bryan (2023) and Katete,2023) in Tanzania add that adult education acts as a channel for professional development, personal growth, self-empowerment, and the promotion of an informed and involved populace.

The provision of adult education faces numerous obstacles in Tanzania despite national efforts to increase access to education, including a lack of funding, a lack of study time, a lack of political will, a language barrier, family issues, and a contextual misinterpretation of the term adult education (Francis, 2023; Kimaro et al., 2022; Mwakyambiki, 2023; Sarafina, 2022). Additionally, (Bhalalusesa, 2020) suggested that

the adult education sector in Tanzania be strengthened and re-established as a self-governing unit under basic education with sufficient manpower and a separate funding line. This signifies that Tanzania is faced with inadequate staff and funding problems for adult education units. The most recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study highlights that, students who have higher levels of education tend to engage more in continued education and training as adults. According to a World Bank report, in 2023, Tanzanian adult education students are particularly weak in mathematics and English competencies, the two important skills that lay the foundation for critical thinking, further learning, and global communication which jeopardize the country's goals and aspirations to become a modern industrialized nation. Furthermore, in Rukwa region, the academic performance of adult learners in basic education in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (CSEE) remains questionable as Overall, the average performance across subjects was just 29%, meaning that 71% of learners did not pass (NECTA,2023) which have serious implications on the human capital development of the country's youth and career development goals in Tanzania.

Key findings from the reviewed studies in Tanzania only focused on the status and challenges facing adult education; thus, little is known about basic education and its impact on career development goals among adult learners in Tanzania. This gap informed the current study; Therefore, this paper aims to fill the gap in the literature by examining the impact of basic education attainment for career development among adult learners' in Rukwa region, Tanzania.

## 1.1 Theoretical Literature

The concept of andragogy, or the theory of adult learning, was popularized by Malcolm Shepherd Knowles (1913–1997), an American educator (Knowles,1980). Andragogy emphasizes that adults learn differently from children due to their life experiences, self-directedness, and readiness to learn, while The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was developed by Robert W. Lent, Steven D. Brown, and Gail Hackett in 1994(Lent et al, 1994). The theory was developed as an extension of Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, integrating its principles

into the domain of career development and decision-making.

In order to comprehend how adult learning affects professional development objectives, andragogy and social cognitive career theory work in tandem. SCCT offers a framework for comprehending how learning experiences impact career-related self-efficacy, expectations, and objectives, whereas andragogy concentrates on the adult learning process. These theories enhance the understanding of how and why education and career-relevant adult learning programs and support networks can empower adult learners to achieve their career and professional goals, making them integral to research on the impact of adult learning on career development.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite national efforts to improve access to education and various programs in Tanzania, many adults face significant barriers, including socioeconomic challenges, cultural influences, a lack of support systems, and poor academic performance (Kimaro et al., 2022). Furthermore, Tanzanian adult learners are particularly weak in mathematics and English competencies (World Bank report, in 2023). The situation slows down a country's goals and aspirations to become a modern industrialized nation. Likewise, the circumstances in Rukwa region, Tanzania, NECTA results indicated that the academic performance of adult learners in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (CSEE) for the year 2022/2023 was notably low across most subjects, with pass rates ranging from 9% in mathematics to 77% in Kiswahili. Overall, the average performance across subjects was just 29%, meaning that 71% of learners did not pass, thereby losing opportunities for career advancement (NECTA, 2023).

This prompts inquiries regarding the impact of basic education attainment on career development among adult learners. Consequently, the present investigation, which aimed to assess the impact of basic education attainment on career development among adult learners in the Rukwa region, Tanzania, was designed to fill a prospective gap. Additionally, the current research addressed the lack of evidence in Rukwa region adult learning centres, as in previous studies (Kimaro et al., 2022; Sarafina, 2022; Katete,2023) none of them were

done in Rukwa region. Specifically under the following objectives.

#### Specific Objectives:

1. To examine the academic performance of adult learners in basic education in Rukwa region, Tanzania.
2. To explore the influence of adult academic performance on their career development goals in Rukwa, Tanzania.

#### Research questions:

1. What is the academic performance of adult learners in basic education in the Rukwa region, Tanzania?
2. How does the academic performance of adult learners influence their career development goals in the Rukwa region, Tanzania?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a pragmatism philosophical paradigm and mixed methods and used a correlational design for the quantitative component to establish the relationship between the academic attainment of adult basic education and their career development. Andragogy and Social cognitive career theory were used which emphasize adult learning principles and provide a framework to understand how adults learn effectively. The mixed-methods strategy facilitated the collection and analysing of qualitative and quantitative data within a comparable timeframe. The researcher employed this method to verify and validate the information obtained from qualitative and quantitative data. The targeted population had a total of 506 respondents in adult learning centres, Rukwa region. The sampling procedures employed in selecting the required sample for the study were probability and non-probability. The

222 adult learners were simply randomly selected from public adult education centers included in the study and 8 adult learning center coordinators were purposively sampled. Hence the study used a sample of 230 respondents based on **Taro** Yamane formula. The data were collected through Questionnaire administration with predominantly closed-ended questions conducted to adult learners. In-depth interviews were conducted with an interview guide to school adult education center coordinators and documentary analysis. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics in terms of percentages and frequencies with the aid of IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences v26. Thematic analysis was also conducted for qualitative data.

The study used content validity and Cronbach Alpha (with a reliability coefficient of 0.8) to assess the validity and reliability of the research tools. One public primary school that was not included in the sampling schools—where different kinds of respondents were included to ensure validity was the site of the pilot test. The participants' worries about their privacy, secrecy, and anonymity were also taken into account.

## 3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 3.1 What is the Academic Performance of Adult Learners in Basic Education in the Rukwa Region, Tanzania?

The study examined the academic performance of adult learners in basic education. It analysed the reports for the certificate of secondary education examination of 2023 from eight registered adult learning centres in Rukwa region. The results are presented in Table 1 in frequency and percentages.

**Table 1. Academic performance of adult learners in basic education**

Subject	Performance in Grades					Total	% Passed in Grade A-D.
	A	B	C	D	F		
Civics	-	2	20	48	80	150	46%
History	-	2	9	52	118	181	35%
Geography	-	2	11	55	82	150	45%
Kiswahili	-	2	21	38	19	81	77%
Literature	-	3	7	20	82	109	25%
English	-	-	8	18	128	154	17%
Mathematics	-	-	0	5	55	60	9%
Biology	-	-	5	26	49	80	39%
Chemistry	-	-	4	15	19	38	50%
Physics	-	-	-	4	25	29	14%

Source: National Examination Results for 2023 CSEE (NECTA, 2023).

A descriptive analysis of the adult learner's academic performance in the Certificate of Secondary Education was conducted. Results are presented in mean and standard deviation.

The results suggest that adult learners in basic education have poor performance, which does not support their career development goals, which in most cases require grades A, B, C, and D. Shahanga (2015) observed the same in the Kibaha town council, found that, adult learners perform very poor in formal education. The news in this study is that the adult learners' academic performance is regressed with adult career development goals, to assess the impact.

### 3.2 How Does the Academic Performance of Adult Learners Influence Their Career Development Goals in the Rukwa Region, Tanzania?

The study examined the academic performance of adult learners in basic education. It analyzed the reports for the certificate of secondary education examination of 2023 from eight registered adult learning centres in the Rukwa region. The results are presented in Table 1.

The poor results of adult learners in basic education as presented through quantitative data, were triangulated with a follow-up interview with coordinators of adult learning centres, who were asked 'What is the academic performance of adult learners concerning their career development goals?' Their responses were:

*Most adult learners intend to achieve grades A, B, C, or D to develop their career goals. But most of them, score a grade 'F' which is below their expectation and hence fail to achieve what they aspired for (Coordinator, adult learning centre A, January 2024).*

### Another respondent argued:

*Enrolment in basic education, these adult learners require some pass grades. However, due to the language barrier, aging, and other challenges, they perform very poorly. The results disappoint most of them (Coordinator, Adult Learning Centre B, January 2024).*

## 4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 4.1 The Academic Performance of Adult Learners in Basic Education in Rukwa Region, Tanzania

The academic performance of adult learners in basic education is a critical concern, particularly in contexts where education is viewed as a gateway to career advancement and personal development. This study focuses on adult learners enrolled in the 2023 Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (CSEE) in Tanzania, revealing a troubling trend of poor academic outcomes that significantly impede their ability to meet career aspirations. The findings indicate low pass rates across essential subjects, with notable disparities that highlight systemic challenges within the educational framework. Recent data from the 2023 CSEE illustrates the dire situation of adult learners, particularly in core subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, and English, where pass rates fell below 25%. This stark reality not only reflects inadequacies in educational delivery but also raises significant barriers for adult learners seeking career progression. The only subject to show a relatively high pass rate was Kiswahili, with 77% of students achieving grades A to D. This disparity suggests that while some learners are capable of achieving academic success in certain areas, they are severely limited in others, particularly those critical for numerous vocational paths.

**Table 2. The influence of academic performance on adult learners' careers**

Examined subjects	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Basic Mathematics subject	60	1	2	1.08	.279
Physics subject	29	1	2	1.14	.351
English Language subject	154	1	3	1.22	.527
Literature in English subject	109	1	4	1.39	.733
History subject	181	1	4	1.42	.642
Biology subject	80	1	3	1.45	.614
Geography subject	150	1	4	1.55	.691
Chemistry subject	38	1	3	1.61	.679
Civics subject	150	1	4	1.63	.763
Kiswahili subject	81	1	4	2.31	.718

Source: Performance of adult learners in basic education (NECTA, 2023).

The findings are corroborated by Shahanga and Kasambala (2024), who observed similar patterns in their analysis of adult education in Tanzania. Their research indicates that adult learners frequently encounter systemic barriers that hinder their academic performance, including insufficient teaching resources, ineffective instructional methods, and a lack of tailored support systems designed to meet the unique needs of adult learners. These systemic shortcomings not only impact academic performance but also exacerbate the difficulties adult learners face in realizing their career goals. Interviews with coordinators of adult learning centres further illuminate these challenges. Coordinators consistently noted that many adult learners aspire to attain grades A to D, essential for their career development. However, they often fall short, receiving failing grades instead. Key obstacles identified include language barriers, age-related difficulties, and potentially outdated or irrelevant teaching methodologies. Language proficiency emerges as a significant barrier, particularly in subjects like English and Mathematics, which require a certain level of comprehension and analytical skills.

In line with Tanzania's Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014, as revised in 2023, equal access to education is the policy issue regardless of age and gender. These findings highlight policy gaps concerning adult learners. While the policy emphasizes basic education for all, it lacks specific provisions addressing the distinct needs of adult learners. This gap is further highlighted by the proposal for a specialized curriculum, as reflected in the field data, which indicated a mean score of 3.35 for curriculum development. Feedback from coordinators underscores this point, advocating for an adult curriculum that considers learners' social and economic obligations. This suggestion aligns with Circular No. 6 of 2016, which stresses the need for inclusivity in curriculum development.

#### **4.2 The Influence of Adult Academic Performance on Their Career Development Goals in Rukwa, Tanzania**

The descriptive results presented in Table 2 and follow up interview indicate that adult learners' performance in basic education is very poor because the mean score is below the average of 3.0, in a range between 1 and 5. This suggests that, if adult learners are enrolled in basic

education to achieve certain academic goals, they end up being disappointed because the academic performance is not in their favour. The poor results should serve as feedback for improvement of teaching and learning towards career development goals as observed by Shahanga and Kasambala (2024). That suggests intervention strategies to help adults achieve their career goals, which rely on their academic performance in basic education.

The extension of adult basic education needs to meet their career objectives is in line with the extension of basic education systems from primary to lower secondary education programmes as suggested in the revised education and training policy (URT, 2023). Therefore, a basic education programme for adults should be made complete by itself as it enables an adult to secure, create or retain his job position for his entire career life. Moreover, the findings resonate with more recent empirical studies that emphasize the factors influencing adult learners' academic performance. For instance, (Lekule & Shirima, 2023) conducted research on the Conceptions of Sustainability of Open Schools in Offering Quality Secondary Education in Tanzania and found that adult learners experience significant stress due to balancing work, family, and academic responsibilities, which adversely affects their academic performance. This stress is compounded by a lack of adequate support systems, suggesting that interventions need to address not only academic content but also the holistic needs of adult learners. That means, without such support, adult learners will continue performing poorer which impact negatively their career aspirations and career life altogether.

Further complicating the situation is the review of Tanzania's Fee-Free Education Policy (2016), which, while instrumental in enhancing access to education for youth, has inadvertently left adult learners facing financial barriers. Interviewees noted that some adult learners struggle with tuition fees, detracting from their focus on studies. Kimaro (2022) corroborated this finding, revealing that adult learners frequently request funding support to cover education costs. These financial challenges underscore the need for adjustments to the current fee-free policy to encompass adult learners fully, particularly those pursuing basic education. This perspective aligns with findings by Mchombu (2023), which advocate for tailored financial aid programmes to support adult learners, allowing them to



concentrate on their studies rather than financial worries. That means if basic education is fee-free for the youth, the same education should be provided on a fee-free basis to the adults to enable them to exercise their education rights for their career and social lives.

The academic performance of adult learners in basic education plays a vital role in shaping their career goals. Success in education not only provides foundational skills but also enhances self-efficacy, motivates individuals, and opens doors to various opportunities. Understanding this relationship can help educators, policymakers, and support organizations create effective programmes that bolster both academic achievement and career advancement for adult learners. The views are in line with the study in European countries which asserted that the world of work is uncertain due to the globalization processes, population growth, and technological advancement, therefore is a need for upskilling and reskilling adults to cope with the working environment (OECD, 2021). Skill development for adult career development is the global agenda in line with Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 8, life-long learning, and decent work (Ahler, 2021). This means that strategies and initiatives for improving adult learners' academic performance are the global need towards agenda 2030 (Ortiz-Ortega and Baez-Carlos, 2023; Romero-Contreras and García-Cedillo, 2023; Warikandwa et al., 2023).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on the study's findings concerning the two objectives. The findings of this study underscore a significant challenge in the realm of adult basic education: the persistent poor performance of adult learners in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination, which hampers their ability to achieve career development goals. While many adult learners enroll in basic education programs with the aspiration to enhance their academic qualifications and unlock better opportunities, the disappointing outcomes point to systemic issues within the education framework. The lack of adequate support, tailored curricula, and alignment with adult learners' specific needs have contributed to these unfavorable results. Consequently, this gap not only diminishes the learners' confidence but also undermines the broader goal of empowering individuals through education to improve their socio-economic status.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Target 4.1 of inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all and to ensure relevant and effective learning outcomes by 2030, It is recommended that, the government, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must reassess and revitalize adult basic education programs. The government should develop a digital monitoring system to streamline adult education programs, Emphasis should be placed on special curriculum development for adult basic education, improving teaching methodologies, providing learner-centric resources, and ensuring that the programs are both accessible and relevant to the learners' career aspirations. By addressing these challenges, adult education can become a more effective tool for personal and professional growth, ultimately contributing to the socio-economic development of the individuals and the community at large.

## DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models, etc have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript. This explanation will include the name, version, model, and source of the generative AI technology and as well as all input prompts provided to the generative AI technology.

### Details of the AI usage are given below:

1. I used ChatGPT to assist me in refining some few sections. However, I did not save the prompts.

## CONSENT

Additionally, the researcher enrolled the participants in the study with their free and informed consent.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

To adhere to ethical guidelines, the researcher asked the Rukwa Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) for permission to collect data from the target demographic.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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