

**CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO PROTECTION AND ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN CAREER  
DECISION MAKING IN MAKINDYE DIVISION, KAMPALA CAPITAL CITY**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER  
OF SOCIAL WORK OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY.**

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## DECLARATION

I, FATUMA OMAR declare that this is my original work and it has never been presented to Uganda Christian University for the award of a Master of Social Work degree or any other institution of learning for any academic award or purpose. Any work which does not belong to me has been acknowledged. This study is about children's right to protection and participation in decision making in career guidance among students in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority.



Signed :.....

Date: 12<sup>th</sup>/ May/2022

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## APPROVAL

The work recorded in this dissertation by FATUMA OMAR has been done under my supervision and it is now ready for submission.



Sign.....

Date 12<sup>th</sup>/May/2022

Mr. OTIM ODENG FRANCIS (Supervisor)

## DEDICATION

To all children and individuals, government and non-Governmental organizations that are championing the fight for children rights.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child
AU	African Union
COVID-19	Corona Virus 19
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
ILO	International Labour Day
KCCA	Kampala Capital City Authority
MoGLSD	Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development
MSW	Master of Social Work
NASWU	Code of Ethics for National Association of Social Workers of Uganda
NCA	National Children Authority
NCPS	National Child Participation Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
NHRIS	National Human Rights Institutions
OAU	Organization of African Unity
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedure
UCU	Uganda Christian University
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## ABSTRACT

This research sought to examine children protection laws on the promotion of the right to participation. It also sought to explore children's understanding of their right to participation in career decision making and also to assess children's participation in career decision making, both at school and home.

This study employed a cross sectional design, utilizing mixed methods research approach. The research undertook a case study exploration of these issues directly with children in order to examine their understanding of participation and their actual participation in career decision making. Teachers, parents/guardians, civil servants and non-governmental organizations that work in line with children, were also involved to assess their role in the promotion of the right to participation.

The key study findings show that Laws and policies on children protection and especially on participation are well articulated, and are in line with universal and international standards. Findings also show that Children's understanding of the right to participation and their actual participation is high. Lastly, the study findings show that there is an increase in the promotion of children's rights which is reflected through the increased participation in career decision making. The study recommends continuance of empowerment and awareness and that children should be supported to realize their participation rights.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being of people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable like children, the oppressed and those living in poverty (NASWU, 2012). This study focused on children's right to protection and their ability to participate in career Decision Making. The intention was to find out children's understanding of the right to participation and their level of participation in career decision making.

Children's participation is not about just asking them for ideas and views but about listening to, taking them seriously and turning their ideas and suggestions into reality. It is also about providing them with the ability to influence some of the things that affect them and helping adults to understand children's issues through their lens. This study will investigate children's right to protection and participation in decision making in career guidance among students in Makindye Sub County, Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), Uganda. This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the Problem, purpose of the Study, objectives, research Questions, justification, significance, scope of the study and the conceptual framework.

#### 1.2 Background to the Study

The historical background presents the history of the dependent and independent variables (right to protection and children's participation in decision making). The

theoretical background presents the theory based on which the variable of the study, especially the dependent variable (child participation in decision making) was investigated. The conceptual background presents the definitions of the core concepts under the independent and dependent variables, especially parental support, stakeholder's involvement and laws and policies as illustrated in the conceptual framework. The contextual background presents the Uganda with the manifestation of issues of right to protection and children's participation in decision making in career guidance among students in Makindye Division.

### **1.2.1 Historical Background**

Child participation is recognized as one of the broad categories of rights in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to which Uganda is a signatory. It spells out the right of children to be involved in issues concerning them. Child participation is interwoven with other rights under the UNCRC which mandates each child's right to participate in all matters affecting them (Gillet-Swan et al., 2018).

Just like the UNCRC, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child (ACRWC) recognizes child participation as a means of ensuring that all actions and decisions by individuals or authorities are taken in the best interest of the child (UNICEF,2007). The Parliament of Uganda also enacted the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 as Amended, passed the Children's Act Cap 59 as Amended by the Children's (Amendment) Act of 2016, the Local Government Act (Cap.243) and the Disability Act 2020, which all recognize the right to participation. Uganda further formulated the National Participation Guide for Uganda 2008, the National Child Participation Strategy



(2017/18-2021/22) and the National Child Policy of 2020 which are intended to create a safe environment for child participation.

The Ministry of Gender Labor and Social Development (MoGLSD) emphasizes that while designing regulations to ensure the protection of children, certain considerations must be met by actors such as legislators, child activists, NGOs, Uganda police, etc. For instance, socio-cultural conceptions of childhood and child-adult communication vary across cultural communities and influence actual children and young people's participation (Gillet-Swan & Sargeant, 2017). Further, public leaders and administrators can play a role in promoting and improving children's participation in public life. Review existing legislation to see how far it is consistent with the participation principles (Ruiz-Casares et al., 2017) in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children. This can be effected by seeking input from civil society, including children's representatives, on any proposed changes; establishing a standing committee to plan and implement children's participation; ensure implementation costs are reflected in national budgets, including provision for seeking children's opinions); promoting children's participation in articles and public speeches; visit and learn from civil society programs that use participatory principles to work with children, or that are co-managed with children (United Nations Childrens Fund,2007).

Although those considerations are met, Gillet-Swan and Sargeant (2018) observed that many barriers placed on children's daily lives often restrict or limit the enactment of children's participatory rights in practice, most noticeably in education. They further observe that it is often the adult who decides what, when and how children can

communicate, and the extent children's views and opinions are sought, considered or incorporated (Abdullah et al.,2018).

According to Lansdown (2001), actions detrimental to the well-being of children do not merely occur when adults deliberately abuse or neglect children. The author further reported that, during the course of the 20th century, adults with responsibility for children across the professional spectrum have been responsible for decisions, policies and actions that have been inappropriate, if not actively harmful to children, while claiming to be acting to promote their welfare, which actions are characterized by a consistent failure to consult or involve children themselves.

Doek (2014) indicates that it is essential to stop considering these children and young people only as 'victims', as they are rights-holding individuals whose dignity and physical and psychological integrity must be respected. Gillet-Swan and Sargeant (2018) also indicate that children's rights require a different approach that respects children and young people and their capacities and involves them as active participants in finding solutions to issues affecting them. They further note that, however, children's rights to participation continue to be difficult to realize in practice. Clarifying the nature and requirements of effective children and young people's participation in child protection is challenging. Children's rights, in contrast, require the respect and implementation of both the protection and participation of children and young people.

Optimistically, a UNHCR report of 2016 reveals that children are now beginning to add their ideas and actions. Decision makers and opinion leaders are asking what children's participation means and why it is essential. The United Nations Convention on the Rights

of the Child, which has been ratified by all but two member states, establishes the rights of children in three important areas: provision, protection and participation. In recent years, governments, civil society and mass media have focused on fulfilling children's rights to protection from abuse, violence and exploitation (UNICEF,2007). But participation is often seen as something new and perhaps difficult to carry out.

### **1.2.2 Conceptual Background**

Participation is a key element to child protection and is fundamental in different stages of protection (Save the Children, 2013), at home, in the community and while formulating laws, policies, designing and managing programs or developing advocacy campaigns.

A '**child**' is defined as anyone below the age of 18years, in accordance with Article 1 of the UNCRC, Article 2 of the ACRWC, Article 257(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda as amended and section 2 of the Children Amendment act 2016.

According to Gillet-Swan and Sargeant (2018), the term '**Child Protection**' is often used to refer to all forms of physical, sexual, psychological, spiritual and emotional care towards children and in environments where children live. Save the Children (2007) defines child protection as measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children. Gillet-Swan and Sargeant (2018), also indicate that child protection work aims to prevent and address all forms of ill treatment that harms or is likely to cause harm to a child's or young person's safety, well-being, development or human dignity in all settings, regardless of who commits

that act (Ruiz-Casares et al., 2017). Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides for the Protection of Children in and out of home environment.

The term ‘**Child Participation**’ refers to Active engagement of children in all issues that affect their lives. Participation is having a voice and being heard in a meaningful way. If honored, participation creates safe places for children in families, communities and institutions (Save the children, 2013) and empowers children as individuals and members of society. Therefore, participation is a right in itself which is interwoven in rights like, the right to express one’s opinion and to be heard, freedom of expression- to seek, receive and impart information; freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association, protection of privacy and access to information (Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (MoGLSD) et al., 2008), in accordance with the relevant legal and policy frameworks. Ruiz-Casares et al (2017) emphasize that participation is meaningful when public information is widely available, many views are taken into account through a variety of methods, including discussions, surveys and referendums, decisions are made cooperatively, through the joint formulation of plans and policies, and in the shared management of institutions and services. Children are increasingly taking part in public decisions. They are speaking out at local, national and international forums, and working for common causes within different cultural traditions and political systems (MoGLSD et al., 2008).

### **1.2.3 Contextual Background**

Effective child protection needs strong laws, strategies and policies in place. In Uganda, there are many positive steps taken in combination to the already existing laws - for

example there is a National Participation Guide for Uganda that is intended to create an environment for children to be heard. But in reality, these laws are rarely enforced or resourced. Many people and officials are unaware of them. Perpetrators often go unpunished (Save the Children, 2017). The report further indicates that an effective and well-funded national child protection system is vital to ensure that we can prevent and respond to violence against children. But in Uganda, the system is fragmented and weak - the referral system is poorly coordinated, services for survivors are scarce, children are not empowered to speak out and report abuse, and traditional beliefs often perpetuate certain forms of violence.

Makindye Sub County leadership works to ensure that all children are protected and actively participate in decision making at the home, school, and community levels. The work of Makindye Sub County aims at ensuring the increased child participation in decision making (Kampala Capital City Authority, 2018).

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

People from all walks of life have a duty to respect, protect and promote the right of children to participate (MoGLSD et al., 2008). Some of these rights are laid out in the UNCRC as well as the ACRWC and these include the right to express one's opinion and to be heard, freedom of expression to seek, receive and impart information, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association, protection of privacy and access to information (Save the Children, 2013). Being a signatory to the UNCRC and the ACRCW, Uganda recognizes the right to participation of all individuals irrespective of age or gender, in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) as amended, the

Local Government Act, and the Children Act. For example, the Situation Analysis of children in Uganda (2015) identified the development of a National Child Participation Strategy (NCPs) as a key policy intervention. This intervention is within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and aims to pave way for child participation in decisions that affect them at national and local levels (UNICEF,2007).

However, whereas there have been attempts to ensure their participation, in matters affecting them like career, child participation in decision making is still low (Forde et al., 2020) because there seems to be no corresponding improvement in child rights protection and their participation in decision making. This study therefore aimed at examining child rights protection and participation in career decision making among students in Makindye division in Kampala Capital City Authority.

#### **1.4 Purpose**

The purpose of the study was to examine child's right to protection and participation in decision making in career guidance among students in Makindye Division in Kampala Capital City Authority.

#### **1.5 Objectives**

- 1) To examine children protection laws in the promotion of child participation in decision making in career guidance among students in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority.

- 2) To explore children understands of child participation in decision making process in career guidance among students in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority.
- 3) To assess children's participation in career-decision making among students in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority.

### **1.6 Research Questions**

- 1) What are the children protection laws in the promotion of child participation in career decision making in career guidance among students in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority?
- 2) What is the children's understanding of child participation in career decision making among students in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority?
- 3) What is the participation of children in career decision making among students in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority?

### **1.7 Scope of the study**

The scope in this study was categorized into Content Scope, Geographical Scope and Time Scope as detailed below.

#### **1.7.1 Geographical Scope**

The study was conducted in Makindye Division in Kampala where Children, teachers, School administrators, parents, and community leaders took part in the study. Makindye Division is one of the administrative zones of Kampala city, located in the southeastern

part of the city bordering Wakiso district to the South and west. It has 54 secondary schools (UNBS, 2019). This study was limited to two secondary schools, which included St. Peters secondary school Nsambya, and Makindye secondary school. These two schools were chosen because the study needed to include both schools which are government and private owned. Makindye division was chosen for its proximity which enabled the researcher to conduct the study from there.

### **1.7.2 Content Scope**

The study was restricted to the key variables; ‘children’s right to protection’ and ‘participation in career decision making’. The study covered the aspects of children understanding of participation in decisions affecting them, role of stakeholders and laws and policies, putting into consideration their roles in facilitating children’s participation and to find out if child participation leads to the protection of children’s rights among the students in Makindye Division.

### **1.7.3 Time Scope**

The study was restricted to the period 2016 to 2020 since this is the period when the Children’s Act was amended and the Child National Policy 2020 was formulated, where children were consulted at different levels in recognition of their right to participation.

## **1.8 Justification**

The Government of Uganda ratified the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1990 as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) which came into force in 1999. In the same manner, Uganda



recognizes the right to participation through various laws like the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), the Children's Act cap 59 as amended in 2016 and strategies like the National Child Participation Strategy. However, research and documentation on the right to protection and children participation in decision making is lacking. The National Child Policy 2020 aims to promote the right of all children to be heard and express their opinions in all matters involving and affecting them, according to their developing capacities. It further states that the government will work with partners to ensure that child participation is more systematically practiced in child rights governance mechanisms as a contribution towards the realization of their rights, but also all sectors and processes. However, little is known about child participation in matters affecting them concerned more especially in career, despite the formation of child rights clubs in some schools in Makindye Division.

The lack of relevant and evidence-based information on this subject is likely to lead to implementation of decisions and projects that are not based on reality as far as child's right protection and actual participation in decision making are concerned in Makindye Division. This study is justified to provide evidence-based information that will lead to increased child participation in decision making and also provide information on which government and private sectors can base to improve child participation in decision making.

## 1.9 Significance

The study results are useful in social work practice, policy development, civil society organizations/stakeholders and future research.

**Social work practice:** The study will promote the wellbeing of children through the ecological approach, by providing an overall framework for thinking throughout the intervention process when dealing with children and stakeholders in respect to their participation in career decision making. Through awareness creation and empowerment, the study will help children, parents, teachers and school administrators, to involve children in a meaningful way concerning their careers.

**Policy/strategy Development:** The study findings, conclusions and recommendations will be useful to policy makers and enforcers especially on children's issues such as the Uganda police in guiding implementation of programs and enforcement of the laws that protect children and their right to participation.

The Ministry of Gender Labor and Social Development can use the study results to design better strategies on promoting children participation in decision making.

**Civil Society Organizations/stakeholders:** Child centered organizations like UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision, Hope for Justice and many others will use the results of this study in guiding them to involve children in matters concerning them, in a meaningful way.

**Future research:** The results from the study will add to the pool of available literature on issues of children protection rights and participation in decision making at home, school, and community levels. This will provide a foundation for future research in the area of child participation.

## 1.10 Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the Ecological Systems Theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979. The ecological system offers lens through which people's relationships within communities and the larger environment can be examined. The theory has five environmental systems that an individual interacts with: the micro system, the meso-system, the exo-system, the macro-system, and the chrono-system.

The ecological approach to children's rights stresses that to understand the phenomenon of child participation, it is necessary to consider conditions and processes that affect children, expanding the environment under consideration to include children's families, communities, the professionals working with them, policy makers, and eventually, the entire regulatory regime (Gal,2011). This approach also relates to children's ability to meaningfully participate in various contexts and forums and the approach also strives to address both the political and social aspects of child participation (Thomas, 2007): the legal, structural, and formal schemes enabling (or limiting) child participation, as well as the informal, cultural and intergenerational constructions of concepts such as childhood, autonomy and the roles of adults in children's lives (Gal, 2017), which provides compelling explanations for current practices in child participation.

From those compelling explanations, it is easier to address the questions of this research, hence making it an appropriate theory in understanding children's appreciation of meaningful participation in career and the role of stakeholders in promoting child participation in relation with the existing laws.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This study was about the right to protection and children's participation in decision making in career guidance among students in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority. The literature reviewed in this study included; laws, text books on children rights and participation in decision making, online journal articles, academic papers, reports from International Organizations and Ministry of Gender Labor and Social Development, National Children Authority, KCCA and civil society organizations involved in promotion of children wellbeing. This chapter presents literature reviewed on each of the objectives of the study. It also presents the gaps identified in the literature.

#### 2.2 Laws on child protection and Participation in Decision Making

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to which Uganda is a signatory is so far the most important human rights treaty for children. Its aim is to ensure that children grow up in a spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights elaborated for children through the UNCRC, the child's right to participate in all matters affecting them under Article 19. It spells out the right of children to be involved in issues concerning them. However, child participation is not explicitly spelt out in the UNCRC but is interwoven with other rights there under. The main Articles that emphasize the participation of children are articles 12, 13, 14, 15, 30 and 31 which mandate each child's right to participate in all matters affecting them.

Article 12 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda as amended, provides that; States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his/her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. Article 13 provides that; the child shall have the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice. Article 14 provides that children and young people are free to be of any or no religion. Their parents/guardians can help them make decisions around religion, but a parent cannot force a child or young person to stop following a religion. Under article 15, children have a right to choose their own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it is not harmful to others. Like all people in the world, children have the right to freedom of association. Article 30, provides that children who belong to minority groups have the right to share their culture, language and religion with other people in that group. Article 31 calls upon states parties to recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Uganda is also a signatory to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child (ACRWC). The ACRWC was adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which is currently referred to as the African Union in 1990 to localize the provisions of the UNCRC in the African Context (MoGLSD et al, 2008). As in the UNCRC, the Charter recognizes child participation as a means of ensuring that all actions and decisions by

individuals or authorities are taken in the best interest of the child. The main articles in respect of child participation in the ACRWC are Article 4(Best interests of a child) and Article 7 (Freedom of expression) but child participation is also implied in other articles like Article 8 (Freedom of association), Article 9 (freedom of conscience choice and religion, Article 10 (protection of privacy) and Article 12 (freedom to leisure, recreation and cultural activities).

Uganda recognizes participation as a right of all persons under its laws from which policies and strategies in respect to child participation were formulated. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) as amended is the supreme law and the right to participation is implied under Article 34 which right is reflected under sections 3 and 4(b), (g), (h) and (j), of the Children (Amendment) Act 2016.

The other laws in respect of child participation include the Local Government Act (Cap.243), which emphasizes that; it is the general duty of every local government council from the village to the district level to safe guard and promote the welfare of children and to designate one of the members to be the person responsible for the welfare of children. The disability Act 2020 provides for extra protection due to limitations brought about by disability, for example, to facilitate the education of disabled children by creating a special educator training program, a mix of intenerated program as well as segregated schools for children with disabilities.

The National Child Participation Strategy 2008 is intended to create an environment for children to be heard in Uganda. In relation, the Child Participation Strategy for East African countries 2015 is intended to establish guidelines on child participation and

strengthen regional and national institutional frameworks, commitments and capacities for child participation. The Uganda National Parenting Guidelines 2018 spell out the nurturing of children holistically in social and education lives. Lastly, the National Child Policy 2020 is intended to ensure that child's right to participation is within a well built and coordinated protection system.

Even with these laws in place, it is very important to review them, to see how far they are consistent with the participation principles (Ruiz-Casares et al., 2017) in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children. This can be effected by seeking input from civil society, including children's representatives, on any proposed changes; establishing a standing committee to plan and implement children's participation; ensure implementation costs are reflected in national budgets, including provision for seeking children's opinions; promoting children's participation in articles and public speeches; visit and learn from civil society programs that use participatory principles to work with children, or that are co-managed with children (UNICEF,2007).

Despite the existence of laws, policies and strategies, there is evidence that child participation is partial at best, and often can be characterized as tokenistic (Sinclair, 2004). Tokenistic participation is when children are given a voice, but in fact, have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions.

### **2.3 Children's understanding of Child Participation in Decision Making**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) establishes the rights of children in three important areas: Provision, Protection and Participation. In order

for there to be meaningful participation, children need to understand the right to participate so that they begin to add their ideas and actions in matters concerning them. Participation requires that children and young people are provided with adequate information to base their decisions on and that they understand the consequences of their perspectives (Gillet-Swan & Sargeant, 2017). Children's understanding of their right to participation is basically based on why participation is important and if adults appreciate why, it is essential and what child participation entails.

World Vision (2016), emphasizes that an important concept in child participation is the notion of children as competent social actors, which has been embraced by the sociology of childhood and has been fully endorsed in childhood literature. This means that children are now considered as actors who are competent to make decisions, are active players in their contexts, and actively form independent social relationships and cultures.

Further, still, World Vision (2016), observes that, perceiving children as agents of change and competent social actors, means they need opportunities to participate in decision-making processes at different levels in families, schools and communities. But on the other hand, World Vision suggests that, to achieve this, adults must create opportunities for children to make choices and to include their voices, so as to enhance their ability to contribute to society.

The sociology of childhood draws attention to the concept that childhood is socially and historically constructed (World Vision, 2016). It observes that, different realities are built from the interactions that children have with each other and their environment,



which is an ongoing process to construct their everyday life and meanings through their actions (Morrow, 2011). Children's experiences are mediated by the discourses that they are able to access, and these discourses affect children's worldviews and how they interpret reality.

According to Hoffman & Macdonald (2011), children are people with dignity whose views should be listened to and respected in the same way as those of adults. They believe that children's participation can enable development projects to meet the needs of all in the community. They also observe that children often want to participate but are not allowed to by adults. The authors think that this may be due to cultural and social perceptions of children as lacking skills and being unable to express their thoughts. There is also a fear that children may become too independent and disrespectful of adults.

Child participation is not something that should be done only because it is the current fashion but because it is an essential part of good development practice. The involvement of children in development projects and community life can reveal new perspectives on problems, create more unity and trust within the community, and develop the skills of the next generation of community leaders and members.

According to Prime et al., (2020), children's natural environment for growth and well-being is the family. However, due to pressures on families around the world, many children grow up with one or no parent or in situations of abuse and neglect which is detrimental to a child's wellbeing. They indicate that, this can result in children taking on responsibility to provide for their brothers and sisters, or being forced to live on the

streets to avoid domestic violence and poverty. This results in these children having to become independent earlier than other children. Hoffman and Macdonald (2011) observed that Participation in community life becomes particularly important for these children because their views are based on their experiences which if considered, would promote their right to participation and as a result, enhance their wellbeing. They need to be able to make good decisions and protect themselves. However, a study by Garbarino (2017), indicates that although it is important for children to participate in community life for their growth and development, appropriating children responsibility meant for adults affects their personal growth and development.

In the African setting, while there are many challenges that make it almost impossible to guarantee child protection at both the family and community levels, UNICEF (2007) suggests that, adults should receive training, so that they know how to work with children in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The author adds that the most effective children's participation occurs when it is part of the normal way of taking public decisions. Contrasting approaches have led to similar results of children being involved in public decision making. Gillet-Swan and Sargeant, (2018) observed that an adult's level of rights awareness alongside their view of children's capacity has significant implications for the realization of children's communication rights. Lack of wider awareness and understanding of children's rights and the implications for practice therefore serve to stifle rather than enable the fulfillment of these rights in and through their daily engagement in education (Gillet-Swan & Sargeant, 2018).

According to Golmbok (2015), the environment affects people's thought, feeling and behavior - it shapes people's habits, expectations and values. As well as environment impacts the people, people impact the environment. There is an interaction between people and environment. Earlier studies by psychologists like Sigmund and Wealder (1964), indicate that social environment is very important for the psychological, mental and physical development of the children. As well as social environment, they further indicate that physical environment also influences brain development. From environmental experiences, the brain learns how it 'needs' to develop. The way of experience is more important than what space tells for children. In this respect, participation is important for children development. Listening to children is about respecting them and also leading them to learn to value the importance of respecting other people (Lansdown, 2001).

According to Stephenson et al., (2004), he says that," the Wheel of participation helps to ensure that children's participation is effective. A wheel is constructed from supportive spokes attached to a hub. The spoke must be balanced and keep the wheel perfectly round if it is to roll smoothly. The Wheel of participation consists of three 'spokes': the principles of opportunity, responsibility and support. Each of these spokes is necessary to support children in the process of participation. The hub represents respect, which forms the basis of the three principles. If respect, opportunity, responsibility and support are not always provided to children, their participation will be unbalanced and slowed down, just as a broken spoke or a flat tyre will affect the movement of a bicycle". The above is an emphasis of why children should be given the necessary attention to enable proper growth and development.

## **2.4 Children's participation in career in Career Decision Making**

For children to have a meaningful understanding of participation, the involvement of stakeholders is inevitable. The major stakeholders involved in the promotion of children's rights are parents/guardians, community, schools, both local and international non-Governmental organizations and government at large. The committee for the rights of children contains various measures for ensuring the protection of children and young people from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

Article 19 of the UNCRC states that all countries shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents, legal guardians or any other person who has the care of the child. Children rely on adults to have their needs met and most children lack decisional rights with their needs being inextricably linked to those of their families and community (Katkin et al., 2017). This is further explained in Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development where a child's development is influenced by one's interaction with the environment, biological characteristics, context and time (Bronfenbrenner, 2004).

Children's rights implementation falls primarily on parents who help their child to exercise their rights. If a child or young person is (or is at risk of being) abused, neglected or exploited, then the child or young person's caretakers have proved irresponsible and most likely with poor attitude towards children (Gillet-Swan & Sargeant, 2018). Indeed, individual attitudes to participation may reflect broader

values and belief systems about children and young people in society as vulnerable and in need of adult protection or unable to act in their own best interest (Gillet-Swan & Sargeant, 2018)

A study by Ruiz-Cesares et al., (2017), indicate that some parents hold myths that must be dispelled about children's participation, especially the myth that children are easily manipulated. The practice of participation improves skills in representing views clearly. Children do not always see things in the same way as adults do. Their point of view is valuable, thus, fair and inclusive ways for children's representation can be devised, particularly by parents at the home level. However, the authors caution that organizing quality participation takes time. Remembering some key principles, and referring to successful examples of children's participation, will help to ensure that their participation is effective in the long term.

According to Masud et al (2016), It is important for parents to realize that there is no single 'correct' method of children's participation. Much depends on family norms, and how the parents were raised. Adults have a duty to listen and respond, and a duty to protect children's interests. Participation can expose children to threats they have not faced before, when they leave home. so, parents have the role to help children take reasonable precautions.

In addition, Lansdown (2001) states that while adults have a responsibility to protect children and young people from harm, scholars have warned about overprotection. Besides adults' resistance to sharing power and losing some control, there is evidence that adults' skills to communicate with children and young people, lack of

understanding of what participation actually entails, and attitudes towards children and young people's participation and protection often act as barriers to children and young people's participation. The author suggests that while striving for more horizontal, equitable relationships, there is a need to develop new models of collaborative decision-making in different cultural contexts to enable children and young people to express their own views and preferences in ways that contribute to their own well-being as well as that of their families and communities.

Studies by Sahithya (2019), indicate that listening to children and considering seriously what they have to say can hardly be said to have been a frequent hallmark of interpersonal relationships or societal organization further observes that the participatory thrust demands considerable - sometimes profound - change in cultural attitudes towards children. That even adults who are utterly sympathetic to the principle of enabling children to express their views may often feel uncomfortable with the ways, means and implications of putting this into practice. Indeed, children themselves frequently experience similar feelings of unease.

According to Sherman and Harris (2012), although the relationship between social class and parenting attracts considerable attention, middle-class and working-class parents raise their children according to two distinct logics of childrearing: 'concerted cultivation' and 'accomplishment of natural growth', respectively. While middle-class parents offer their children a myriad of organized leisure activities, elicit their opinions and put emphasis on a good rapport with teachers, their working-class counterparts use more directives, maintain a looser schedule for organized activities and are less involved in institutional settings ( Moghaddam, 2017).

Kornrich and Furstenberg (2013) consider parenting as an investment of time and money. From their perspective, constraints on resources are thought to impede parental investments. While time investments are mainly required for managing children's schedules, monetary investments are assumed to be far more important. Using a qualitative sample of eighth-graders and their parents in the United States of America, Bennett et al., (2012) found that financial constraints were more significant than culture. This conclusion is also reached by Chin & Phillips (2014), who report that the social class gap in summer break activities stems mainly from differences in financial situations. However, the authors believe that the major problem with the aforementioned approaches is that they treat social class as a kind of nuisance that persists after its material or cultural aspects have been stripped away. Even if a measure of social class position is used, it is rarely the focus of any theorizing.

In Africa, as is contained in a report by Save the Children (2017) on the role of parents in child upbringing in Kenya, it is argued that the manner in which parents raise their children is driven by the prevalent levels of poverty and illiteracy, yet driven by strongly influential way of raising children based on African cultural practices. Most African societies, especially in sub-Saharan Africa do not acknowledge the concept of children rights, let alone children participation. Thus, the promotion of children protection in most African societies is a concern of governments, child activists, and schools. According to UNICEF (2018), the high prevalence of early pregnancies among most African countries had led to an increase of younger parents who do not have any knowledge on how to raise children, themselves being children at the time they give birth. Younger parents hardly understand the complexity or importance of child rights

protection, which makes it even harder to expect such parents to involve their children in decision making.

In the Uganda context, according to Plan Uganda (2016), parents have not fully embraced government's and civil society's call to protect children's rights. This is especially due to social economic and cultural reasons. Many parents across cultures in Uganda view children as beings who should be told what to do and their role is to simply obey the parents. This cuts across social class, location, and tribal affiliations. The report adds that if parents cannot listen to their children's opinions, they can hardly allow them to participate in any family decision making. Particularly, the report further indicates that parents rarely listen to the interests of their children when selecting the kinds of courses, they should pursue in school or when selecting a particular school to enroll them.

Dalmaiher (2021) also notes that influences on children's lives come from a variety of sources throughout the social ecology, including their parents, families, peers, schools, and local communities, as well as the local, state, and federal governments, as well as the international community and the natural environment. National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) should promote and facilitate participation in all of these environments in order to try and influence and transform laws, policies, budgeting, service provision and design, cultures and norms, political priorities, and socioeconomic conditions that affect children, both now and in the future, according to UNICEF (2018). UNICEF claims that the use of social media and the digital environment, which enable the creation of much larger networks and a reduction in the need for adult



support, improve prospects for wider engagement. All these potential prospects must be investigated and taken into account by NHRIs.

Furthermore, UNICEF (2008) acknowledges that children can participate in decisions, processes, and activities at one of three generally distinct levels: consultative, collaborative, or child-led. It goes on to say that it's crucial to avoid viewing these in terms of a hierarchy of preferences. Additionally, it highlights the fact that while each form of participation offers varying degrees of empowerment and influence, they are all valid and suitable in various situations.

In that respect, according to Truex (2017), Consultative participation is where the NHRI seeks children's views to build knowledge and understanding of their lives and experiences. Consultative participation is an approach that is adult-initiated and led and managed by adults. However, it recognizes that children have a valuable perspective to contribute to the development of policies, services or local facilities. An NHRI may use consultation processes, for example to help inform its priorities for future planning; and/or to receive inputs from children on government proposals for policy or legislative change.

According to Fitriani & Qodariah (2021), Public services and facilities which are used by children and affect their welfare. Some, such as schools, play centers, hostels and many others may provide services especially for children. Others, such as transport and health services, count large numbers of children among their customers. When users are involved in the development and operation of services, it is more likely that they will

be well-targeted, appropriate and efficient to support the protection of children within given communities.

Kelly (2009) asserts that failing to include children in the planning process might have expensive repercussions. In fact, when children's perspectives are taken into consideration, child protection outcomes improve. For instance, a young participant in an NGO children's club expressed her happiness that the group had been successful in convincing her parents to keep her home when the family's income unexpectedly decreased. By evaluating the current arrangements, public officials can take action to start or improve children's participation in national life.

Save the children (2020) notes that children's participation is crosscutting and should permeate all actions/decisions affecting children. It further notes that in this way, it is viewed as both an individual's right (i.e., to have children's views heard and taken into account in issues concerning them), but also a working method that crosscuts all themes and contexts. As such, children's participation is a set of civil rights to be fulfilled, a principle to be applied, and a means to fulfill other rights.

Relatedly, UNICEF (2014) indicates that organizational structures in education such as curriculum development, delivery modes, behavior and student welfare policies, class size and timetabling play a significant role in establishing and reinforcing cultural priorities at the classroom level.

While somewhat required from the perspective of organizational efficiency, Van & Karsten (2015) contend that such structures that can affect the implementation of children's participation rights typically do not incorporate the student perspective.

They contend further that these structural elements frequently have a direct impact on the culture and central purpose of educational provision since they can also affect attitudes toward more general educational issues including inclusion, student diversity, student capability, and student voice. The incorporation of the child's perspective on these important organizational components, according to Racolța Paina & Andrieș (2017), may provide a nuanced perspective not previously available. The source continues, "These protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide the child and those who have custody of the child with the necessary support, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, and follow-up of cases of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement."

Masson (2014) argues that more recognition of the multiple ways in which children can communicate effectively is needed. They also indicate that, core to this realization is the understanding that the enactment of children's communication and accessibility rights in practice, such as the right to freedom of expression, opinion and communication choice, relies on systems that enable and support these freedoms. Further, they indicate that children and young people's participation is necessary for effective and respectful protection, as required by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Hart, 2013).

The most widely endorsed international human rights treaty with 196 ratifications/ accessions, generally the CRC requires that children under the age of 18 years have the

right to participate in accordance with article 12 and other pertinent provisions (UNICEF, 2012). On addition to the above, no matter which part of the world they are in, children should be treated as children, and their participation becomes a priority championed by governments.

## **2.5 Summary of Literature**

Literature reviewed indicates that there is a substantial amount of information on the subject of right to protection and children's participation in decision making. However, during the review of literature some gaps were identified. There was a contextual gap identified; For example, while there are numerous studies that analyze how families and communities contribute to children participation in decision making, there are hardly any studies that analyze children's understanding of the right to participation in the Uganda context, especially in the Kampala setting. Most of the available studies on these variables are based in the developed world setting especially Europe and North America. Operational gaps were identified in respect of both implementation and enforcement of the law that protects children's right to participation. Lastly, there was an apparent conflict between culture and children's right to participation. This study, thus, sought to clarify how the right to protection relates with children's participation in decision making in the Ugandan context.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology used in the study. In particular this chapter contains; research design, area of study, sources of information, target population/population sample, sampling techniques, variables and indicators, procedures for data collection, data collection instruments and equipment, research instrument, quality/Error control, Strategy for data processing and analysis, ethical considerations and methodological constraints.

### **3.2 Research design**

This study employed a cross sectional design, utilizing mixed methods research approach. The qualitative research design was used for exploratory purposes with a few of the participants that included parents, teachers and those whose line of duty is in respect to children. These are collectively referred to as stakeholders in this study. The intention was to purposefully select participants to help better understand child's right to protection and their participation in career decision making. The research findings reflect their perceptions and experiences and the way they make sense of child protection and participation in career decision making. Information was gathered through an interview guide that was used during the face-to-face interviews.

On the other hand, quantitative research design was used for survey purposes with a large sample of the respondents who were only children, to find out their understanding of child participation and if children actually participate in career decision making both at home and school. This helped the researcher enrich the interpretation of the findings

of the study because the study is basically qualitative. Quantitative information was gathered through questionnaires.

### **3.3 Area of Study**

Makindye Division, one of the five Divisions that make up KCCA (Ministry of Local Government, 2023) and located in the southern section of Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, was the subject of the study. The Division is composed administratively of 21 parishes, 15 of which are informal settlements. Makindye rises 1,230 meters (4,040 feet) above sea level at its highest point. Two schools from Makindye division were chosen, and these include St. Peters Nsambya secondary school and Makindye secondary school. These two schools were chosen for the study because one is a private school while another is a government school. This was because the researcher needed both perspectives from a private and a government school. Makindye division was chosen because of proximity which enabled the researcher to manage the research in that area well as this also enabled her to cut costs involved in the research.

### **3.4 Sources of information**

The key sources of information included existing literature in form of laws, policies, text books on children rights and participation in decision making, online journal articles, academic papers, reports from local and International Organizations and Ministry of Gender Labor and Social Development, National Children Authority, KCCA and civil society organizations involved in promotion of children wellbeing. The sources of primary information were the respondents in Makindye Sub County who provided primary information to the research questions.

### 3.5 Study Population

The study population is the subset of the target population available for study (Bryman & Cramer,1996). According to Cresswell (2009), a population sample as a sub-section of the population, which is selected to participate in a study. The target population for this study were school going children aged between 13-17 years, from two schools located within Makindye Sub-County. One school is government funded while the other is a private school.

For purposes of this study, ‘Children’ refers to those between the ages 13-17 that attend the secondary schools that were the subject of this study. While Stakeholders refers to all the other respondents/participants that took part in the study and these include; the relevant people at the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development and at the National Children’s Authority, relevant people from Non-Governmental Organizations that work in the best interest of the children, teachers, parents/guardians with school going children that attend the two secondary schools.

The study participants included secondary school children in Makindye division as the primary respondents. The participants included; parents with secondary School going children in the secondary schools where the study took place within Makindye Division, head teachers, teachers, Probation and Social Welfare officer, representatives from Ministry of Gender Labor and Social Development, representatives from National Children Authority and representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations (N.G.Os).

### **3.6 Sampling determination and selection**

#### **3.6.1 Sample determination for quantitative**

The study utilized 64 students who were drawn from the population utilizing the morgan and krejice table for quantitative approach. The study considered 33 respondents from each school, adding up to 66 respondents. The students constituted the study population for the quantitative approach.

The response rate for the study was 97% for the quantitative approach.

For Quantitative, the researcher used the morgan table, where the sample was randomly selected and placed in clusters of boys, girls, ordinary level, advanced level, between the ages of 13-17years. From the first school 32 students were selected, and from the second school, 32 students were selected.

#### **3.6.2 Sample determination for qualitative**

According to Muellmann (2021), Key informant interviews should be in the number between 15-35. This is also supported by Sukmawati (2023), who also argues that the maximum number for key informants should be 35 individuals for interviews. This study utilized 32 participants who were considered key for the study.

The researcher used purposive sampling technique to arrive at the target population. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question. In using purposive sampling, the researcher was able to identify key characteristics required for the sample by recruiting those who meet the purpose of the study and based on their unique position. For example, parents and teachers meet the purpose of this research while the probation



officer, relevant officials from non-governmental organizations, officials at the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development and at the National Children's Authority were selected based on their unique position of being in charge of children issues. The snowball approach enabled the researcher to effectively access the study participants (Bhadwardji,2019). This made the process of data collection cheap and simple for the researcher.

### **3.7 Variables and indicators**

The independent variable is right to protection which focuses on child protection laws in the promotion of participation, stakeholder involvement and stakeholders' level of awareness of the right to participation. The dependent variable is child participation in decision making which is viewed in terms children's understanding of the right to participation, children's level of awareness, home participation and school participation.

The indicators of participation were the level of stakeholder's awareness, stakeholder support, level of children's understanding of the right to participation and level of children involvement in decision making matters at the home and school.

### **3.8 Procedures for data collection**

Data collection was preceded by getting a letter of introduction to the field for data collection from the Faculty of Social Sciences at UCU after the approval of the Research Ethics Committee (REC). Data collection was done over a period of two months. Two research assistants were led by the researcher in data collection. In the first week data collection instruments were developed and pre-tested before full application. Still in

the first week, contacting and making appointments with participants was done. In the second week, questionnaires were administered to selected participants. This was done by two research assistants whose minimum qualification was a diploma. In the second week, interviews with key respondents were conducted. In the third week, all collected data was organized and sorted for correctness and analysis.

### **3.9 Data Collection instruments**

Research Instruments are measurement tools designed to obtain data on a topic of interest from research subjects (Cresswell, 2009). For the purposes of this research, the researcher used the interview guide, questionnaires and face to face interviews.

#### **3.9.1 Interview Guide**

The interview guide helped the researcher to stick to the objectives of the study and asking questions that are in line with the study and ensuring that all vital issues about the study are responded to accordingly. The items on the interview guide were based on the three research questions of the study which are also generated from the conceptual framework. The questions were asked in an in-depth manner that helped bring out deeper insight from the participants.

#### **3.9.2 In-Depth Interviews**

The interview guide was complemented by in-depth interviews. The researcher used in-depth interviews which, according to Braun and Clarke, (2006), are face-to-face conversation with an individual that usually collects specific information about that person or a certain situation that is used in qualitative research methods. This method according to Amin, (2005) is more appropriate when the sample is small and is more

preferred because it allows clarifications and the use of probing which all ensure the collection of accurate and high-quality data. Open ended questions were asked which gave the respondents ample room to explain their experiences and expectations. Here, the researcher took the role of a facilitator to enable the respondents to talk about their experience in an informal atmosphere which was to encourage the respondents to open up. In-depth interviews also provided much more detailed information. Here, the respondents were the teachers, the probation officer and a relevant officer from the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, NCA and NGOs.

However, the researcher realizes that in-depth interviews have some disadvantages that include; time consuming, generalization about the results cannot be made when using in-depth interviews of the small samples that are used, they require high levels of training and skill to conduct and data analysis maybe challenging which the researcher is well prepared to deal with.

### **3.9.3 Questionnaires**

The questionnaire that was used in this study was generated by the researcher based on the three research objectives and the dimensions of the independent and dependent variables. This aimed at ensuring that standardized questions are asked, a factor that would make generalization much possible. The response rate tends to be higher when this data collection method is used. A questionnaire was used because it is easy to administer and analyze. It is also economical in terms of time and money.

Three sets of structured questionnaires with mostly close ended questions structured in respect to the study objectives were used to collect data from Children. Students

were selected with the help of teachers/caretakers in their respective schools. The questionnaire contained four sections; a section on the personal details about the respondent, the rest of the three sections, each, contained questions about the three research questions.

### **3.10 Quality/Error |Control**

A pre-test was carried out to find out the effectiveness, relevance, and reliability of the interview. This helped the researcher to determine the time and costs that were involved. The pre-testing was carried out in Makindye Sub-County with randomly selected four (4) respondents that were not part of the research but fitting the study's criterion. Pre-testing helped the researcher to correct unclear questions and ascertain the nature of responses given by respondents.

### **3.11 Data processing and analysis**

For the qualitative data, demographic data from the interviews were presented in its raw form making use of descriptive analysis. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the gathered data. The process involved reading through the recorded data repeatedly, and engaging in activities of breaking the data down by thematizing and categorizing, building up key points by elaborating and interpreting in order to identify emerging themes and their relationships to the main objectives of the study. Data were reviewed and sorted into categories for ease of interpretation by using manual data analysis.

For quantitative data, pre-testing was carried out with randomly selected four (4) respondents that were not part of the research but fitting the study's criterion. Pre-

testing helped the researcher to correct unclear questions and ascertain the nature of responses given by respondents.

### **3.12 Ethical considerations**

#### **3.12.1 Informed Consent**

The researcher provided the respondents with information about the study on when, where and how it was to be conducted to allow them to decide whether or not to participate in the study. The respondents were informed of their right to withdraw consent at any time they felt like they should not participate. Since the researcher intended to interview children as well, the researcher sought for the consent of those in whose direct care and control they stay and also for the children's assent directly.

#### **3.12.2 Confidentiality**

The researcher will ensure that the information given by the respondents will not be divulged to anyone without their consent or consent of the significant others. Knowing that the information shared during the interview will not be released to anyone without their consent helped the respondents to build confidence in the researcher and as a result, the respondents gave credible information with ease.

#### **3.12.3 Anonymity**

The researcher did not reveal any identifying information of individual respondents whether in written or other communication. During data presentation, the researcher used code names to avoid identification of the respondents. This helped the

respondents gain confidence to share their experiences freely without fear of being revealed.

#### **3.12.4 Privacy**

The researcher made sure that the privacy of the respondents is protected by ensuring that interviews are not done in public places but tried as much as possible to make them private.

#### **3.13 Methodological constraints**

The major limitation of this study was that it was carried out in one Sub County (Makindye) and during the Covid-19 restrictions. If all factors were constant, the researcher should have conducted the study in as many other Sub Counties as possible, and consider a bigger number of variables. The other constraint were language given the fact that Makindye is dominated by people from different walks of life and also, the other constraint was in failure to get the targeted people for interview with ease and financial burden. Also given the fact that the researcher interviewed students at school, this was a little hard due to limited access to schools. But still when the schools were opened, they were not open to the public leading to long procedures of accessing teachers and children which resulted to the researcher losing out on a whole month in time.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The study investigated children’s right to protection and participation in career-decision making among students in Makindye Division in Kampala Capital City Authority. This chapter presents the data, its interpretation and discussion in line with the study objectives.

#### 4.2 Study Respondents

The study participants/respondents included secondary school students in Makindye division who were the primary respondents. The other participants were stakeholders who included, parents, head teachers, teachers, Probation and Social Welfare officer, representatives from Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, representatives from National Children Authority and representatives from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as shown in table 1 below.

**Table 4.3: Participants and Respondents for the study**

Category	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Students	41	23	64	67.3%
Teachers	9	2	11	11.5%
Parents	4	6	10	10.5%
N.G.Os/Government	6	4	10	10.5%
Total	60 (63%)	35 (37%)	95	100 %

*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

The table above shows that, respondents (students) composed 67.3%, while the participants, 11.5% were secondary school teachers in Makindye division in Kampala Capital City Authority. Parents contributed 10.5% of the participants while CSO/government employees contributed 10.5% of the participants. In terms of gender distribution, 63% of the participants were male while 37% were female.

#### 4.2.1 Religion of the Participants/respondents

The study inquired about the religious affiliation of the participants, and the data are shown in table 2 below,

**Table 4.4 Religion of the Participants/respondents**

Category	Catholic	Protestant	Moslem	Born again	SDA
Students	26	11	4	22	1
Teachers	6	2	3	0	0
Parents	3	4	1	2	0
C.S.O/Government	5	4	0	1	0
Total	40	21	8	25	1
Percentage	42.1	22.1	8.4	26.3	1.0

*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

The table above shows that 42.1% of the participants were Catholics, 26.3% were Born again, 22.1% were Protestants, 8.4% were Muslims whereas 1.0% were Seventh Day Adventist. This shows that all the participants had a religious denomination with the majority belonging to the Christian religions.



#### 4.2.2 Age of the children respondents

The study targeted children between 13 to 17years as the primary participants that attend secondary school in Makindye Division. The data regarding the age of the children participants are as shown in table 3 below.

**Table 4.5: Age of the children respondents**

Age	Number of participants	Percentage
13	10	15.6
14	25	39.1
15	15	23.4
16	6	9.4
17	8	12.5
Total	64	100.0

*Source: Primary field data,2022*

Table 3 above shows that 39.1% of the children participants in the study were aged 14 years, 23.4% were of 15 years, 15.6% were of 13 years, 12.5% were of 17 years while 9.4% were aged 16 years old. This means the children participants who took part in the study were of the required age of between 13-17 years and attending secondary education in Makindye division in Kampala Capital City Authority.]

### 4.3 Laws and Policies on Children's Participation.

#### 4.3.1 Awareness of laws and policies

The study inquired from the participants whether they were aware of specific laws or policies guiding children's participation in the country. The data are as shown in the table below.

**Table 4.6: Laws on children's participation**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Teachers</b>		
Yes	6	54.5
No	5	45.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>NGOs/Gov't</b>		
Yes	10	100.0
No	00	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

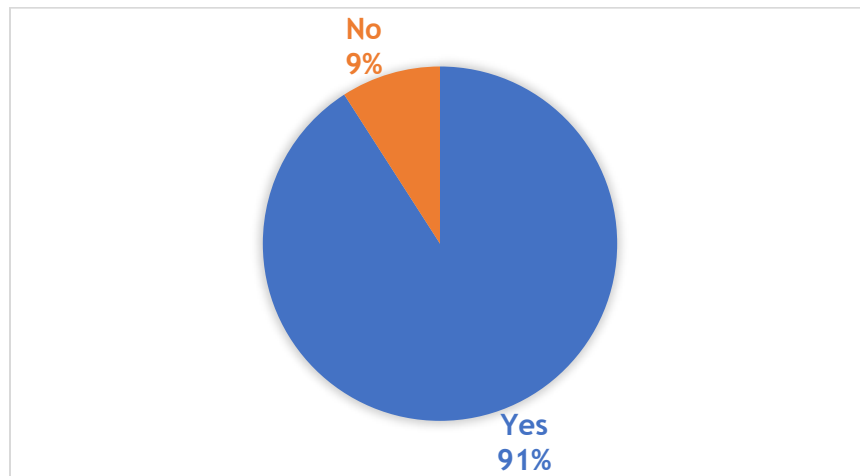
Table 4 above shows that 54.5% of the teacher-participants were aware that there were laws and policies guiding children's participation in the country whereas 45.5% were not aware of any laws or policies. Amongst the participants from the civil society organizations and the government, all the participants (100%) said that there were laws and policies guiding children's participation in the country. Laws and policies mentioned by the participants included; UNCRC, African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995, Children Amendment Act 2016, the Local Government Act cap 243, Disability Act 2020, the National Child Participation Strategy 2008, the National Child

Policy 2020 and Child Participation Strategy for East African Countries. In addition to these laws and policies, there were also parenting guidelines that spelt out the nurturing of children holistically.

#### 4.3.2 Rules and Regulations for children's participation at School

The study inquired from teacher-participants about the existence of rules and regulations that guide children's participation in career decision making at school. The data shows that ten out of eleven teachers (90.9%) answered in the affirmative while only one teacher (9.1%) answered in the negative as shown in the chart 2 below. They mentioned school rules and guidelines and they also mentioned that there is a career teacher in school responsible for guiding students to ensure participation in career decision making.

**Figure 4.1 Presence of School rules and regulations**



*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

## 4.4 Understanding of children's participation

### 4.4.1 Heard of rights

To investigate understanding of participation, the study inquired from children participants whether they had heard about the concept of rights and where they had heard it. In their responses, all the participants (100.0%) concurred that they had heard of rights generally and specifically children rights. When asked where they had heard about the concept of rights, the data collected are indicated in the table below;

**Table 4.7: Where participants heard of rights**

	Frequency	Percentage
School	44	68.7
School and home	10	15.6
Television	7	10.9
School and television	1	1.5
Radio and television	1	1.5
Camp	1	1.5
Totals	64	100.0

*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

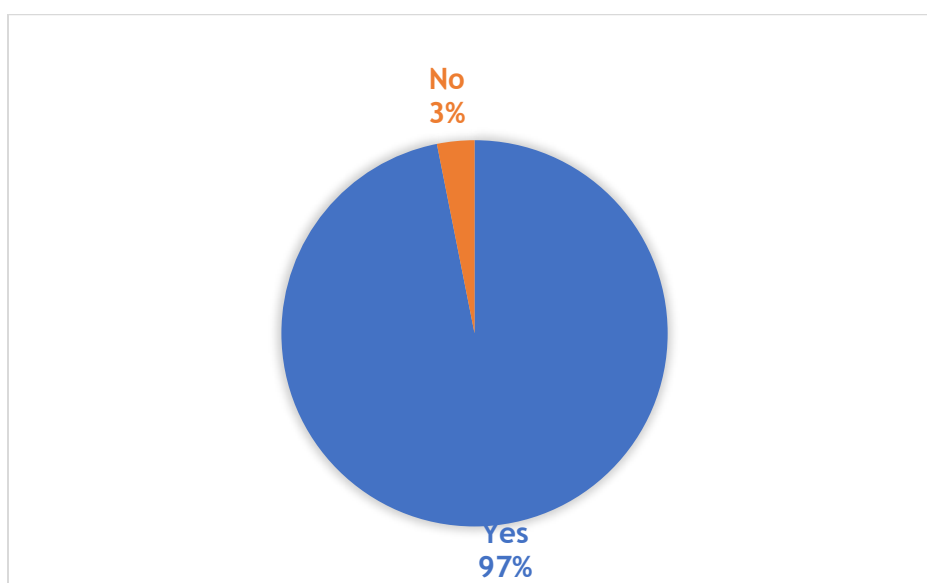
The table above shows that, 68.7% of the children said they heard of rights from school, 15.6% said they heard of rights both at home and school, 10.9% heard through television, 1.5% at school and television, 1.5% at children camp and 1.5% heard from the radio and television as shown in table 4 above. The parent-participants were also asked the same question and all of them (100%) said they had heard of children rights and they

mentioned places like local council meetings, radios, television and literature on laws and policies.

#### 4.4.2 Children's rights

The study inquired from the student-participants whether children had rights, the data are indicated in the chart below.

**Figure 4.2: Do children have rights**



*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

The chart above shows that 97% of the students who participated in the study confirmed that children possessed rights. Some of the rights mentioned by children participants included; right to a name and nationality, right to basic education, right to be protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation, right to medical care, right to grow up in a peaceful, caring and secure environment, right to know his/her parents and enjoy family life, right to express an opinion and be listened to and the child with disability to be treated with the same dignity as other children and right to leisure, play and to

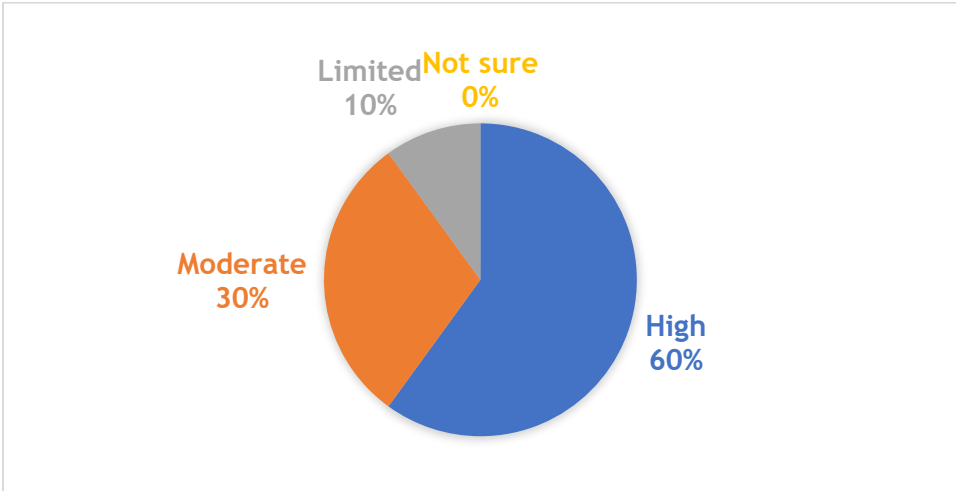
participate in sports. Only 3% of the participants said that children did not have rights. According to these participants it's the adults/parents and teachers who dictate on what children should do and the views of children are not listened to in the family and school.

**4.4.3: Level of awareness on children rights**

The parents were asked whether children have rights, all the parents who participated in the study confirmed that children also have rights. Some of the rights mentioned by the parents included; the Right to health, right to education, right to participation, right to a name, right to religion, protection, shelter, clothing, parental care and expression. Therefore, data from the parents confirmed the earlier data from the children arguing that children also have rights just like the adults.

The study inquired concerning the level of awareness on children rights from NGOs and government participants. The data are in the chart below;

**Figure 4.3: Level of awareness by stakeholders**



Source: Primary field data, 2022

The chart above shows that 60.0% of the NGOs and government participants acknowledged that the level of awareness on children rights is high, 30.0% felt it was moderate while 10.0% felt it was limited. The participants argued that through awareness raising and sensitization campaigns conducted in and out of school, children are part of the wider community who benefit from such campaigns. Key informants had this to say;

*“In districts like Kampala where we work, the level of awareness is higher compared to where we don’t work. We have behavioral surveys and for last year 2021, 76% of children reported they are aware of their rights, responsibilities and how those rights are linked to their wellbeing”* (Technical Programs Manager for Child Protection, World Vision Uganda, male). 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2022.

*“...they have deliberate interactions of their participation. For example, children have a children’s council where they sit as children and talk about their issues as children, they write them out and present them to the staff. When they present them, we later sit in a staff/child meeting and react to their issues .....”* (Light House female Manager, Hope for Justice). 12<sup>th</sup> February ,2022.

It is therefore apparent that there was a good level of awareness on children rights. This means that children in Kampala are more informed on their rights owing to the fact that most child rights protection/advocacy organizations are based in Kampala as seen from the Uganda National NGO register of 2020. This paints a picture that children

in in the rural areas of Uganda are not as informed about as their colleagues in the urban setting.

#### 4.4.4 Training on children rights

The study inquired whether the children had received any form of training on children rights. Study data are shown in the table below;

**Table 4.8: Training on children rights**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Children</b>		
Yes	39	60.9
No	25	39.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Teachers</b>		
Yes	10	90.9
No	1	9.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Parents</b>		
Yes	1	10.0
No	9	90.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

The table above shows that 60.9% of the children participants said they had received some form of training on children rights while 39.1% argued that they had never received any kind of training on children rights. 90.9% of the teacher-participants acknowledged having received training on children rights while 9.0% didn't and also 90% of the parent-participants denied having received any form of training on children rights



while 10% acknowledged having received the training. When probed on this issue, the civil society organizations revealed that they encounter a challenge in organizing these trainings because time scheduled for trainings may not be appropriate coupled with high expectations from participants for transport refund/facilitation and certificates which in most cases are not available. Children were asked where the trainings were conducted. They mentioned; school, on television, at home, church, on the day of the African Child, and also from the Chief Administrators Office. One key informant had this to say;

*“One of the pillars in the National Child Policy 2020 is Child Participation, during the Day of the African Child and the Day of the Girl Child, the Ministry organizes a series of trainings for children in child participation”*  
(Assistant Commissioner, Children Affairs, MoGLSD). Male, interviewed on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2022.

This means that both government and non-government organizations actively participate in recognizing the rights of children by celebrating days that are dedicated to the plight of children, and on such days more awareness on children’s rights is emphasized.

Teacher-participants were asked how the trainings were conducted, and they mentioned seminars/workshops and inviting external resource people from both government and civil society. Trainings focused on child participation in academic performance, formation of clubs and societies, right to health, clean environment and rights of children with disabilities. Children mentioned that rights are contained in

National Legislation like the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, Children Amendment (2016) Act and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

This was corroborated by one key informant interviewed who had this to say;

*“Staff are trained as trainer of trainers and also children attend these sessions twice a week depending on the time table and some are informal while others are formal”* (Advocacy Specialist/Light House Manager, Hope for Justice). Male interviewed on 12<sup>th</sup> February,2022.

The above means that both the teachers (majority with 90%), and children (60.9%), were aware of children’s rights having received the trainings organized as seen above.

However, some of those who said they had never received any training acknowledged knowing some of the children rights. This was backed up by key informants who said;

*“Even in the school curriculum, there are aspects of child rights, we engage children to inform them on their fundamental basic rights as enshrined in various children’s laws, Children (Amendment) Act 2016, UNCRC, African Charter among others”* (Assistant Commissioner Children Affairs in the MoGLSD). Female 12<sup>th</sup> February,2022.

This means that even without the trainings, the education curriculum creates awareness on children’s rights.

*“Children have received trainings on their rights through various interventions by National Children Authority. The Authority has mobilized more than 80 child rights clubs in schools both primary and secondary whereby pupils are sensitized on their roles, rights and responsibilities”*

(Executive Director, National Children Authority). Male interviewed on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2022

This continues to shade light on the continued government efforts through its organizations like the National Children Authority in emphasizing the need to create child rights awareness.

In conclusion, scholars believe that authoritarian educational practices and a lack of awareness of children's rights perpetuate attitudes that limit children's ability to participate in education and have an impact on career decision-making (Gillet-Swan and Sargeant 2018). Further, he notes that involvement is anticipated in educational activities and active participation, where a child's involvement and contribution are valued, genuine, and made possible by embracing individual communication capacity. However, children's understanding of their entitlement to participation is necessary for this participation to be achieved. Career counseling and understanding children's entitlement to decision-making participation are related. This boosts children's self-esteem by letting them know that they are valued and that their opinions are taken into account, which benefits their aspirations for the future.

#### **4.5 Children's participation in career decision making**

##### **4.5.1: Children involvement in career decision making at school**

The study asked whether children should be involved in career-decision making at school, and the data are shown in the table below;

**Table 4.9: Children involvement in career at school**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Children</b>		
Yes	64	100.0
No	00	00
<b>Teachers</b>		
Yes	7	63.6
No	4	36.3
<b>Total</b>	11	100.0
<b>CSO/Gov't</b>		
Yes	10	100.0
No	00	00.0
<b>Total</b>	10	100.0

*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

In the table above, all the children-participants (100%), admitted that children should actively be involved in career-decision making process at school. Data also shows that 63.6% of the teacher participants argued that children should be involved while 36.3% said there is no need of involving children in decision making because adults know what is good for the children. Furthermore, all the NGO/government participants concurred that children should fully be involved in career decision making at school.

Most of the participants contend that once students get involved in decision making in matters that affect them academically then academic performance is more likely to be high, there will be reduction in drop-out rates, good morals and above all good working relationship between teachers, learners and parents/caregivers. They noted that areas where children are involved in decision making included; games, subject selection,

eating/food, electing their leaders, career guidance, speech days, health/environmental, religion, school clubs and societies and debates about children rights. In schools visited, it was observed that, students were free to join clubs and societies of their own choice and there were situations where students competed with teachers in sports and games as a way of cementing their relationship. One key informant had this to say;

*“It makes children feel safer and gives them courage.....this is where we belong.... it even reduces on school drop outs because once they are free to play and speak to their teachers, they feel more comfortable.....”* (male Teacher, Makindye Secondary School).4<sup>th</sup> February ,2022.

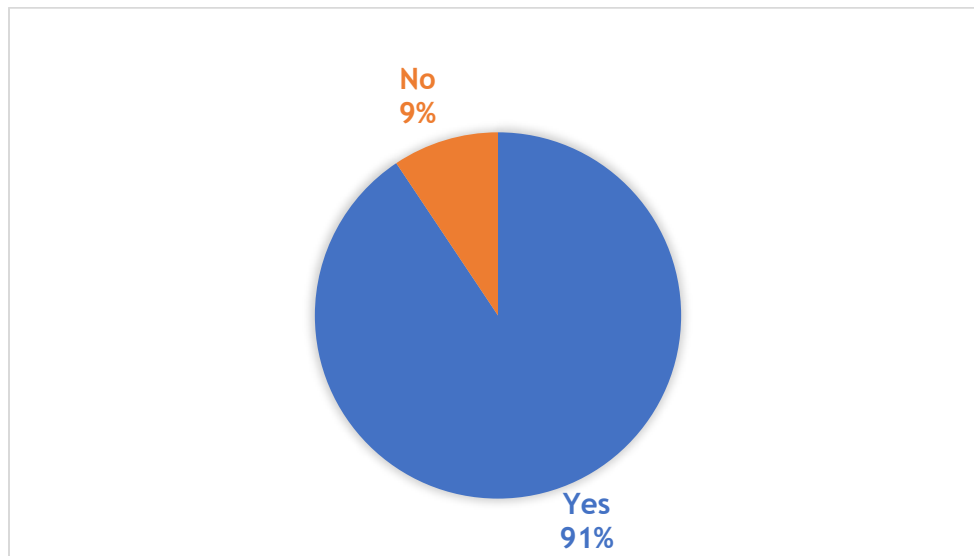
The above submission emphasizes how children feel, and it impacts on the school dropout rate when they are allowed to participate in decision making.

Furthermore, when the participants were asked how child involvement in career decision making can be improved in the school, the children participants who participated in the study mentioned the following; the formation of clubs and societies, teaching subjects concerning their skills, education talks by inviting mentors in respect to children’s interest, letting children choose subjects according to career aspirations, making follow ups, writing compliant letters, improving children’s confidence, elections involving children, counselling, explaining different careers, career guidance to begin right away from senior one where they should be given an insight in all subjects, use of suggestion box and education tours.

#### 4.5.2 Children and career decision making at home

Another study objective explored children's understanding of child participation in career decision making process at home. Data collected are shown in the chart below;

**Figure 4.4: Children involvement in career at home**



*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

The chart above shows that 91% of the participants agreed that children should be involved in career-decision making and guidance while only 9% of the participants disagreed that children shouldn't be involved in career-decision making. The parents who participated in the study argued that when children get involved in matters affecting them right away from home, then there are higher chances that these children will complete their education pursuing courses of their own choices and will be better positioned in future than those whose career is determined by parents without their input.

Further, when parents were asked how children involvement in career-decision making can be improved at home, the following were mentioned; encouraging career through parents providing time to talk to their children, through family meetings, sensitizing parents on children rights, organizing career meetings at home, counselling, developing a good relationship between children and parents. One participant had this to say;

*“Parents should be more open minded and not impose on a child but support the child so that the child feels that he/she is not lonely but he is doing it for himself and people who love him... having talks with parents makes us comfortable to share our goals with them”.* (A male child participant). 4<sup>th</sup> February,2022.

This points to the fact that when parents actively engage their children regarding career decision making, the children feel involved which in one way creates confidence and ownership of their decisions.

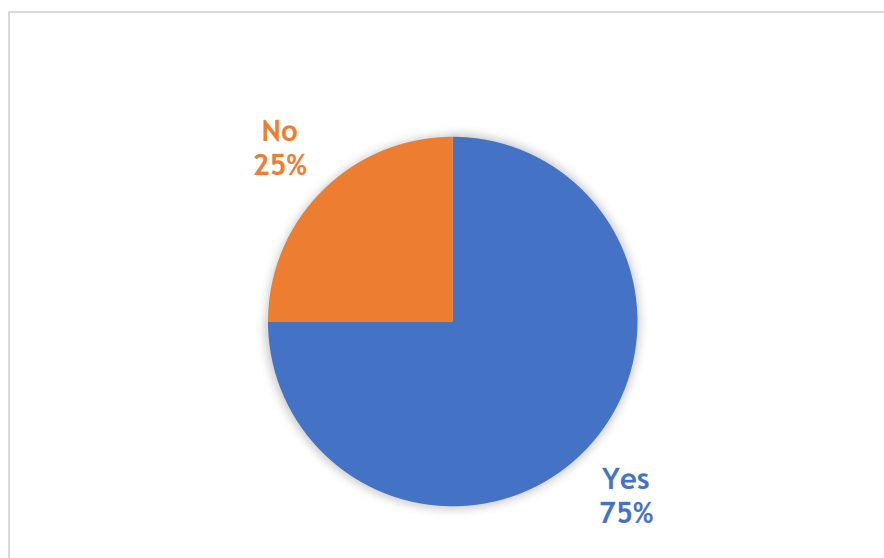
The participants who included parents and teachers were asked about their understanding of child rights to participation, the responses included; involving children in matters that affect them, by involving children to choose the subjects they want, to discuss with children on issues to do with their studies and the involvement of children at all stages in their life. Furthermore, the study inquired on how children can be involved in decision making regarding their career at home, the participants (parents) all concurred that children are involved in decision making. The ways under which they are involved included; by discussing with children, giving children time for revision, doing homework together and by listening to one another. The participants were asked ways in which children involvement in career decision making can be improved at home.

The participants (parents) mentioned; allowing children's views, respect what children say, appreciating good things done by children, bringing many options on table, being friendly, and not using abusive language.

#### 4.4.3 Opportunities to air views on career at home

The children participants were asked whether they had opportunities to air out their aspirations at home as regards to their career, and the findings are in the chart below;

**Figure 4.5: Opportunities to air views on career at home**



*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

The data in the chart above show that 75% of the children participants agreed that children had ample opportunities to air out their views in respect to their career aspirations at home while 25% answered in the negative implying that such children didn't have clear opportunities. When asked further in which way, they mentioned during family meetings, during discussions with elders, counselling, during tours, during their free time, when doing house chores and by talking to their parents. This is supported by the key informant who had this to say,



*“For me, I don’t rubbish what children say but allow their views to be heard especially when it comes to academics then I guide and support them”*

(Female parent, Makindye Division) 10<sup>th</sup> February,2022.

This means that parents gave their children the opportunity to air their views at home.

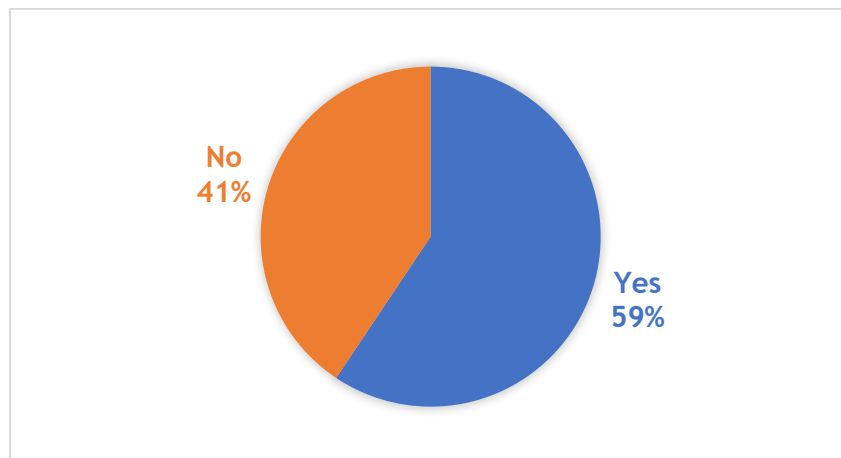
#### **4.5.4 Involvement in career decision making at school**

The study also inquired as to how children can be involved in decision making regarding their career at school. All the parent-participants agreed that children should be involved directly in matters that affect them by teachers listening to children in subject selection because children know what they want, rewarding best students, encouraging children by joining clubs, develop children’s talents, collective efforts of parents and teachers, inviting motivational speakers and career talk to begin on the first day of school. When asked how children involvement in career-decision making regarding can be improved at school, the teacher participants mentioned; allowing children to take on their own choices, guide children/help them discover their talents, giving children opportunities to speak out, schools to promote clubs, counselling and guidance.

#### **4.5.5 Opportunity to air views on career aspirations in school**

The study inquired from children participants whether there was opportunity to air views concerning career aspirations in schools, the findings are in the chart below;

**Figure 4.6: Opportunity to air views on career aspirations in school**



*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

The data in the chart above shows that 59% of the children participants answered that they had received opportunity to air their views concerning career aspirations in their school while 41% disagreed, that they did not get the opportunity to air their views. These views corroborated the opinions of the teachers who stated that children had room to air their views concerning career in times of guidance and counselling, debates, during election of their leaders. Meanwhile the parents said this is done by respecting children views and guiding them, allowing them to choose the course of their choice, engaging children to know their preferences, guiding them accordingly, treat children the way they are because they are unique and having age-appropriate discussions. Participants from civil society organizations and the government, also concurred that children are given opportunities to air out their views. They pointed out that during celebrations, children are allowed to air on issues that affect them. One key informant said;

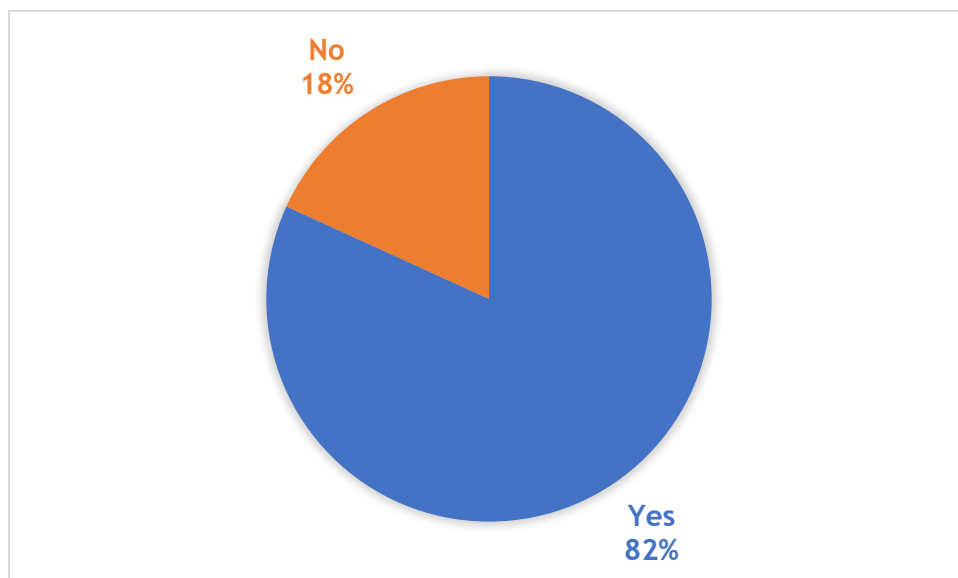
“... We have children clubs in schools which also create children councils within their particular sub county where we operate which also links up to the district where we have children’s college which also links to national level, purely its giving children their rights and giving them a voice to articulate their concerns and educate themselves” (Child Rights Coordinator, Save the Children Uganda) Male, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2022.

This shows that clubs were playing a role in promoting children’s rights in schools through offering a platform to air their views at school.

#### 4.4.6: Child rights in participation and involvement in decision making

The study further inquired on whether lack of child rights in participation limits children in decision making, the findings are shown in the chart below;

**Figure 4.7: Child rights in participation and children decision making**



Source: Primary field data, 2022

The chart above indicates that 82% of the teacher-participant answered in affirmative, while only 18% answered in the negative. Those on the affirmative were of the opinion that, once child rights to participation are not observed then it would be hard to involve children in decision making especially in career guidance. The teacher participants who disagreed, were of the view that, lack of child rights to participation doesn't necessarily limit children's involvement in the decision-making process. They argued that this depends on the child's family background and peer group pressure especially fellow classmates who contribute widely to their involvement in decision making. On this issue one key informant had this to say;

*“The day of African Child, a lot of activities go around making sure that children are rich and have a different forum to ensure that their voices are heard but there is also a U-Report app for reporting child abuses” (Female Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF, Uganda).2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022.*

This means that children's rights are protected through the formulation of an application where children can easily report child abuse.

It is apparent that concerning the matter of participation of children in career decision making, the challenge was lack of guidelines to be followed by everyone promoting child participation. One of the key informants had this to say;

*‘There is need to streamline guidelines in respect of participation because we have so many NGOs with different guidelines...’ (Male Programs Officer, NCA).6<sup>th</sup> February,2022.*

The above is an indication that each agency applied its own approach which resulted in confusion among the public and child actors, young people and the children. Although in 2008, a National Child Participation Guide was designed to contribute to the realization of participation as a right for all children and to respond to the good intentions of actors promoting child participation (MoGLSD,2008) with the overall aim of all children to participate in all issues concerning them like career, and to take every effort to ensure that even those with special needs have access and opportunities to participate (MoGLSD,2008), more strategies like the National Child Participation Strategy (2017/18-2021/22) and policies like the National Child Policy have been put in place, emphasizing the same issue of participation.

In relation to the above, the Uganda Children's portal (2017), National Child Participation Strategy was launched in 2017, which provides for direction for key stakeholders like families, communities, parents, leaders, teachers, policy makers and children to promote meaningful and quality child participation at all levels of the Ugandan Society. The strategy aims to provide an enabling environment to children to voice their views on issues affecting their lives and for adults to listen and respect these views.

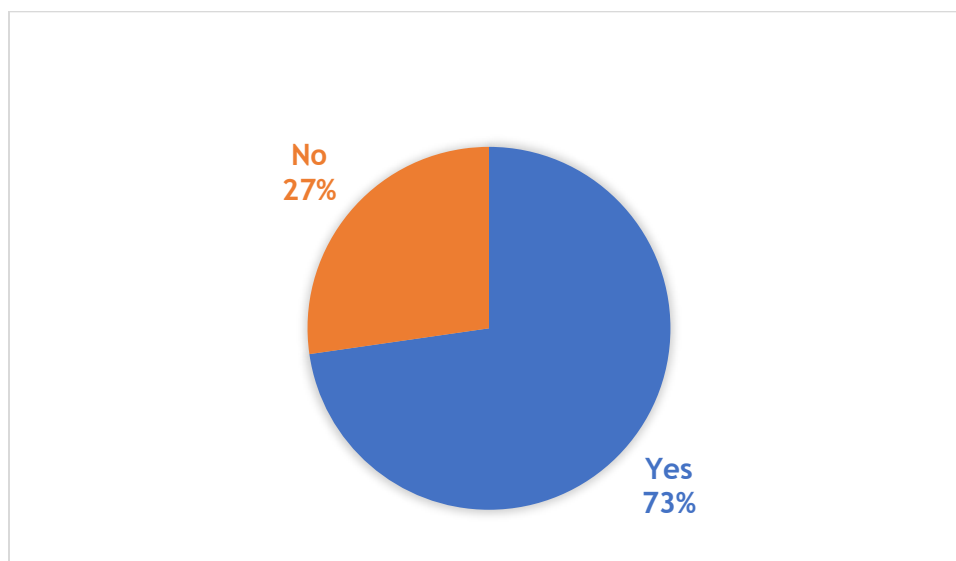
The National child Policy 2020 is also in fulfillment of the government of Uganda constitutional mandate on the welfare of children and also a fulfillment of the MoGLSD mission to mobilize and empower communities to harness their potential while protecting the rights of vulnerable population groups that include children. The National Child Policy was developed through a highly participatory process that involved a wide range of stakeholders with very vast knowledge on children at national, regional,

district and community levels. In fulfilment of the right to participation, children were also consulted separately at all levels (National Policy,2020), an indication that Uganda is setting high standards through laws, policies, strategies and guidelines to ensure protection of children’s rights, especially the right to participation.

#### 4.5.7: Staff capacity in child rights and involvement in decision making

The study also sought to know whether staff capacity affects involvement of children in decision making, the results are shown in the chart below;

**Figure 4.8: Staff capacity in child rights involvement in decision making**



*Source: Primary field data,2022*

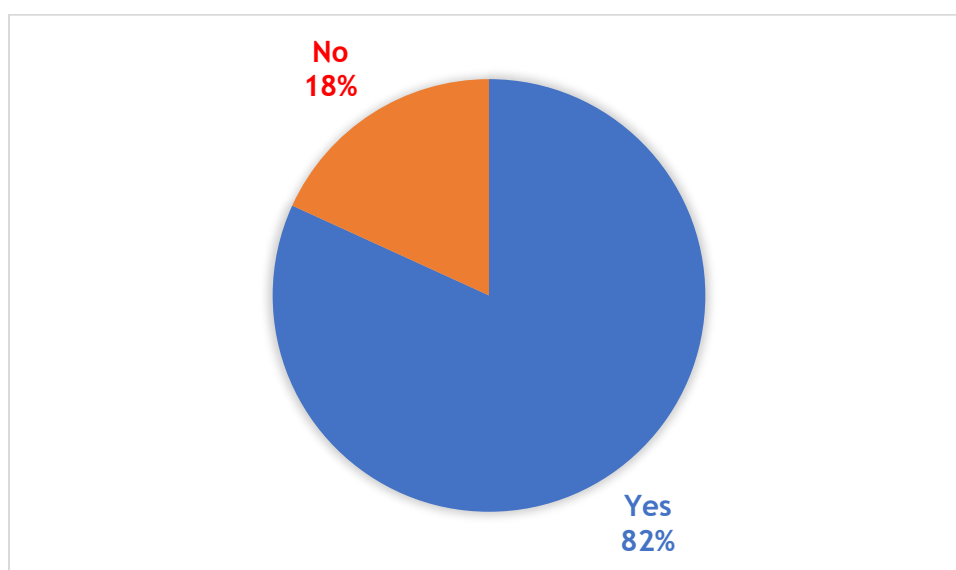
The chart above shows that 73% of the teacher-participants reported that staff capacity greatly affects children involvement in decision making process in their career while 27% disagreed that staff capacity doesn’t affect children involvement in decision making. Staff capacity is built around trainings conducted by different stakeholders in the areas of child rights protection and participation who involves government officials,

local governments, and civil society organizations, religious and cultural leaders among others.

#### 4.5.8: Staff championing participation in career decision making at school

The study inquired if there was a specific staff championing participation in career at school, the study findings are shown in the chart below;

**Figure 4.9 School staff championing participation in career-decision making**



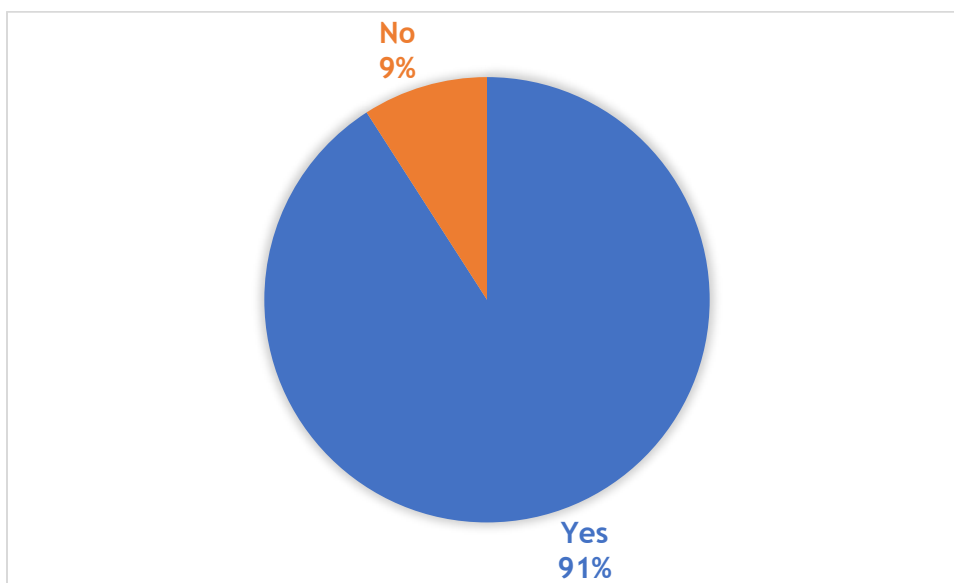
*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

The chart above shows that 82% of the participants who were teachers concurred that there is a specific staff championing participation in career decision making at school whereas 18% disagreed that there is no specific staff designated in the area of championing participation in school. The teacher participants said that there is a career master designated to handle career aspect in the school, there is also deputy head teacher, Director of Studies and class teacher who work hand in hand on issues of career guidance. The teachers further said they had attended trainings organized both within and outside schools in the area of child participation.

#### 4.5.9 School efforts to avail child friendly information materials

The study investigated whether the schools avail child friendly information materials to children, the findings are shown in chart below;

**Figure 4.10: Schools effort to avail child friendly information materials**



*Source: Primary field data, 2022*

The findings in the chart above show that 91% of the teacher participants were of the view that children are availed with child friendly information materials while 9% responded in the negative. The information materials availed to children included among others the talking compound, charts in classrooms, pictures, newspapers and articles pinned on school notice board. These child friendly information materials greatly contribute to children's academic performance. In addition to child friendly materials, schools also have suggestion box targeting students that are shy to express themselves where they write and point out issues that affect them in the school. The key informant had this to say;



*“Such suggestion boxes help school administrators to solve and act on children’s complaints before it is too late and this has helped on reducing on strikes in schools...”*.

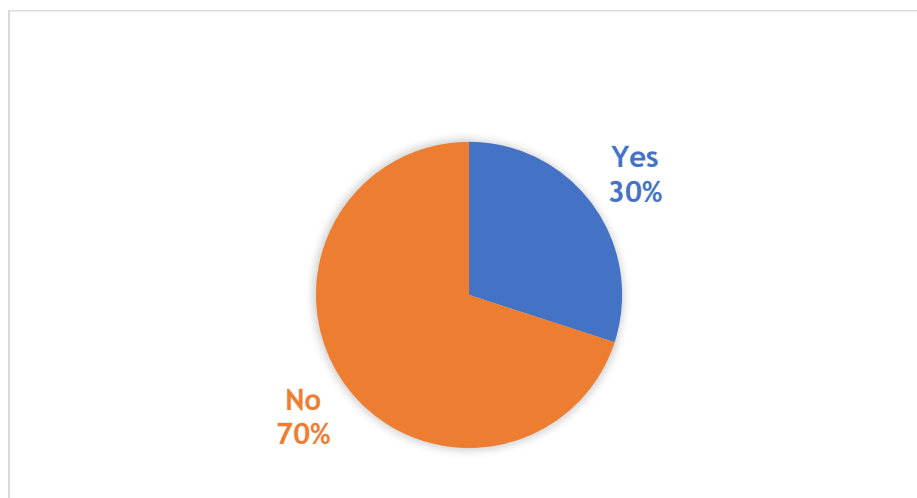
(Male Teacher in an interview, St. Peters Nsambya) 4<sup>th</sup> February,2022.

This shows that schools had created avenues where all children could present their concerns through presenting their views without exposure of their personalities by way of using the suggestion box. This serves to protect the identities of the shy students and all those that can’t easily express themselves verbally.

#### **4.6 Culture and child participation in career making**

The study inquired from the NSOs and government officials the effects of culture on promotion of child participation in decision making in career. The data collected are shown in the chart below;

**Figure 4.11: Culture and child participation in career decision making**



Source: Primary field data,2022

The chart above shows that 70% of the CSO and government participants believed culture has less impact on child participation in career making while 30% said it has a big impact. To those who believed that culture has a big impact, stated that culturally children are children and they are never consulted even on issues that affect their lives including career decision making. They further argued that culturally, children are considered as those in need of protection and not as persons with the rights and capabilities of independent individuals. Children more often than not have been regarded primarily as part of family unit not as independent acting individuals. Key informants had this to say,

*“Socially where a child is defined in terms of having no capacity to do what he/she can do, cannot decide for him/herself and everything about her is decided by an adult and parents, is not there to determine his/her best interests, its determined by somebody else.....our culture still has influence on child participation”* (Assistant Commissioner, Children Affairs, MoGLSD). Male, interviewed on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2022.

*“We have harmful norms, attitudes and practices, children are not given priority because we need to change attitude not to think that a child is to be a child and is supposed to be under adults”* (Male Technical Programs Manager for Child Protection, World Vision Uganda). Interview conducted on 4<sup>th</sup>/February/2022.

This means that culture still has an impact on child participation in career decision making.

However, even those who said culture has no impact, agreed that it has an influence but not of great impact on career decision making. They argued that due to the cultural background where girls were sidelined, girls were not free to take up certain courses. However, currently girls freely compete with boys in all subjects and they have a choice on which subject combination to be taken at all levels. One key informant had this to say;

*“Culture has minimal impact on child participation in decision making in career guidance and as teachers we encourage children to pursue courses of their own choice regardless of gender”* (male Teacher, St. Peters SS Nsambya).4<sup>th</sup> February,2022.

It was also stated that government in partnership with civil society organizations have come up with strategies to fight negative cultural norms and practices such as the INSPIRE Strategy (World Vision, Uganda). The INSPIRE strategy has seven strategies that include; Implementing laws and Enforcement, addressing norms and values, safe environment, parent caregiver support, income and economic strengthening, response and support services and lastly, education and life skills. These strategies help countries and communities intensify their focus on prevention programs and services with the greatest potential to reduce violence against children which has helped to fight negative cultural attitudes that have greatly reduced in society.

In summary, as rightly observed by Bronfenbrenner (2009) children do not develop in a vacuum but develop in relation to their environment to which the stakeholders are part. Stakeholders’ involvement in the promotion of child participation in decision making has benefited children in Makindye Division. Children often gained knowledge of their

rights and the services available to them at home, school, community and social media. They learned important skills in advocacy and how to make their issues known to the public through opportunities created by the stakeholders like, sensitization, respecting their views and guiding them, supporting them where necessary, guiding them, having age-appropriate discussions, working collectively and treating them the way they are because they are unique.

Lansdown et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of children being recognized as active, important and democratic participants in the school through active and authentic participation across multiple areas of school life such as school policy, design, teaching feedback and evaluation, staff recruitment, behavioral management and contribution to making the curriculum more relevant to children's reality (Gillet-Swan and Sargeant, 2018). Therefore, this calls for more active and authentic participation of children in these structural areas of school life that are also reflected across the participatory models relevant for education proposed by those with a commitment to participatory recognition (Gillet-Swan and Sargeant, 2018). Therefore, the collective effort of the stakeholders has led to an increase in the promotion of children's rights which is reflected through the increased participation in career decision making in Makindye division.

On the other hand, the study data also revealed that although culture still has an impact on child participation, it is on a lesser scale given the fact that people are now beginning to dispel all cultures that do not respect human rights more especially, the children's right to participation.

The education pursuit of every child is relatively determined by their family and school setting. Parents and teachers are primarily responsible for the educational and career development of their children. Teachers and parents have a great role to play in ensuring that children acquire the appropriate social, psychological and academic development. This is in line with the Ecological Systems Theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (2009), where he observed that the micro system is the system closest to the person and the one in which they have direct contact. This means that it has a big impact on the development of an individual. Some examples of the micro system would be home, school, daycare, or work. Therefore, teachers and parents should be trained more on child participation because they will own all the mistakes made during their course of action both in and outside the school.

Parents/guardians and teachers should embrace fair and inclusive ways of participation by providing clear information, avoiding stereotypical representations of children as passive, vulnerable and homogeneous, and promoting more balanced, intergenerational relationships as was rightly observed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study. They are in line with the background, introduction, literature review, data analysis, findings and discussion.

#### 5.2 Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions of the study categorized according to the study objectives.

##### 5.2.1 Laws and policies on child protection and participation

The study findings show that Laws and policies on child protection and in particular on promotion of participation are well articulated in Uganda and are in line with universal and international standards like UNCRC and ACRWC to which Uganda is a signatory. These laws and policies/strategies include; The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 as Amended, the Children (Amendment) Act of 2016, the Local Government Act Cap 243, the National Participation Guide for Uganda 2008, the National child Policy 2020 and the child Participation strategy for East African Countries.

The study further revealed that trainings on those laws, policies and guidelines on child participation take place in schools and communities. The majority of participants had heard of rights generally especially children rights, from different forums like school, home, community and media because Makindye Division is located in Kampala City.

### **5.2.2 Children's understanding of child participation**

A majority of Children in Makindye Division had an understanding of child participation in career-decision making. However, few of the children believed that they have no rights and that these rights are held by the adults. The student-participants understanding of the right to participation in career decision making is partly attributed to a greater acknowledgement of the rights of the child by stakeholders namely: the parents, teachers, NGOs and government.

### **5.2.3 Children's participation in career decision-making**

Children in Makindye participate in career decision making which participation was facilitated by the Stakeholders. Stakeholders' involvement in the promotion of child participation in decision making has benefited children in Makindye Division. Children often gained knowledge of their rights and the services available to them at home, school, community and social media. They learned important skills in advocacy through clubs, mentors and motivational speakers and how to make their issues known to the public, which has helped in the promotion of the right to participation.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

This section presents the recommendations of the study and they are in line with the study objectives.

### **5.3.1 Laws and policies on child protection and participation**

Laws and policies on child protection and participation are well articulated in Uganda but there is need for continuous awareness creation in homes, schools and communities.

Understanding and accepting children's right to participation in career-decision making

requires guidance as the key to the future of children. Therefore, there is need for increased and continuous promotion of child centered and focused accountability processes within schools focusing on the best interest of children.

There is also need for schools to create free online platforms where students can access laws, policies and guidelines on their rights and responsibilities in more simplified terms for easy understanding of the children that will help them participate freely in decision making and career guidance in their respective schools in a more meaningful way.

The study revealed that some teachers did not know about most children rights most especially the right to participation which was surprising to some that it was in existence. Therefore, schools should organize routine refresher courses for teachers on the rights of children as a priority because these are people who deal directly with the children.

There is also need to for continuous raising of awareness and capacity building of child rights actors, parents and the community at large to enable improved participation in guidance of students for career-decision making. Such awareness should be in the language understood by the recipients and consideration should also be given to those that have disabilities. Government and child rights actors should help provide special materials intended to pass on the message of children rights generally but with great emphasis on child participation.

### **5.3.2 Children's understanding of child participation**

Children under all circumstances need to be supported in order to realize their participation rights especially children with special needs who need special attention. In order to fully realize the child's right to freedom of opinion, expression and



participation, there is need for more recognition of the multiple ways in which children can communicate effectively in the day-to-day living.

Further, there is need to create an environment in which children's rights are taken as being important as adult rights where children are empowered to speak out their opinions freely and feel safe and protected in all settings at home, community and school in matters of career.

There is also need to advocate for the inclusion of the principles and methodology of child participation in the training curriculum of the social welfare such as social workers, teachers, health workers, lawyers, police and army in order to embed these values in the core practice of these actors.

In addition, there is more need to strengthen career clubs like Music Dance and Drama (MDD), sports, debate and societies in schools so as to empower students freely speak out on matters affecting them in their academic performance.

Children learn through different avenues and not only in a class setting. Schools should become more innovative and pass on the message of children's right most especially the right to participation through creation of online platforms where students will participate freely in decision making and career guidance in their respective schools. The other avenues could be through inviting influential people with different backgrounds and professionals to mentor children in their different fields of interest which will enable meaningful participation in career.

Understanding of child participation should not begin at secondary level but should begin at the time when a child is able to communicate because involving children in all

decisions affecting them at a young age will provide confidence and security to be active, engaged and great contributors throughout their lives.

There is need to have good relationship and mutual respect for both teachers/parents and the children in order to create a safe environment that will enable meaningful participation.

### **5.3.3 Children's participation in career decision making**

Teachers should be encouraged to identify children's capacity as soon as they join schools to enable the development of their talents and be motivated in career decision making. This will also help in the reduction of school drop outs across the country. This can also be done through academic counselling and continuous analysis of learners' performance by teachers especially one on one with the students and identifying their strengths and weakness.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in collaboration with Civil Society Organizations should develop a costed dissemination strategy to track access to and utilization of the child participation by the target audience. Government and Civil Society Organizations should offer refresher training courses to teaching and non-teaching staff in schools on child rights. Community structures and those in leadership should sensitize their people on child rights regardless of gender and age.

Also, the government should provide clear programs that are age appropriate to address the needs of children including the need to participate in career.

The National Children Authority should fully be operational to create awareness on the right of a child and ensure implementation of related laws, policies, guidelines and programs.

The government should increase on the number of teachers in schools such that the pupil/teacher ratio be streamlined to enable teachers fully monitor and guide the students under their command.

Career guidance should be an independent topic in schools such that students are well prepared by respective teachers on their rights and responsibilities especially on their right to protection and participation.

Monitoring and evaluation of child participation guidelines should be encouraged and the findings in the reports be implemented by schools, government and civil society organizations.

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APPENDIX 1

FATUMA OMAR

C/o P. O. Box 36097, Kampala.

0756228079/0712926440

Date: 25<sup>th</sup>/January/2022

The Head Teacher,  
..... S.S.S

RE: ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am called Fatuma Omar, a student at Uganda Christian University, carrying out a study on child's right to protection and ability to participate in decision making with a focus on participation in career, in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority. My target is children between 13years and 17years that are enrolled at school and their respective teachers within Makindye Division. I have attached hereto my Research Approval letter from the University Research Ethics Committee.

My study is purely for academic purposes meant to allow me complete my Master degree in Social Work. I have chosen this school due to its reputable background to participate in this study. I have developed some few sets of questions that I would like to ask your students (About 33) and teachers (About 7 including the D.O.S and Career Guidance Teacher). The exercise is intended to take about 40 (Forty) minutes. I have attached a copy of an interview guide, in respect of the teachers and a questionnaire in respect of the students.

In case my request is put into consideration, I am kindly requesting for any of the following days in the afternoon or Saturday morning if the day falls on a Saturday. The days are, 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2, 3, 4,5,8,10,11 and 12 February. Am also open to your suggestions since I respect the fact that you may wish for another day depending on the school program.

Awaiting your timely response.

Thanks in advance.

Yours,

.....

FATUMA OMAR

**APPENDIX 2**  
**ASSENT FORM (CHILDREN)**

**Dear Respondent,**

I am called Fatuma Omar, a student from Uganda Christian University, carrying out a study on child's right to protection and ability to participate in decision making with a focus on participation in career, in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority. My study is purely for academic purposes meant to allow me complete my Master degree in Social Work. I have chosen this school at random to participate in this study. I have developed some few sets of questions that I would like to ask you. You are free to participate or not, and everything you say will be used for academic purposes only and high level of confidentiality will be assured. If you are willing to answer these questions, please let me know.

If yes, continue and fill the Questionnaire below.

**THANKS.**

**APPENDIX 3**  
**CONSENT FORM (NGOs & GOVERNMENT)**

**Dear Respondent,**

I am called Fatuma Omar, a student from Uganda Christian University, carrying out a study on child's right to protection and ability to participate in decision making in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority. My study is purely for academic purposes meant to allow me complete my Master degree in Social Work. I have chosen this organization at random to participate in this study because it is in charge of children's wellbeing. I have developed some few sets of questions that I would like to ask you. You are free to participate or not, and everything you say will be used for academic purposes only and high level of confidentiality will be assured. If you are willing to answer these questions, please let me know.

If yes, kindly let me know when we can meet or arrange for a call for you to answer the questions.

**THANKS.**

**APPENDIX 4**  
**CONSENT FORM (TEACHERS & PARENTS)**

Dear Respondent,

I am called Fatuma Omar, a student from Uganda Christian University, carrying out a study on child's right to protection and ability to participate in decision making in Makindye Division, Kampala Capital City Authority. My study is purely for academic purposes meant to allow me complete my Master degree in Social Work. I have chosen you at random to participate in this study. I have developed some few sets of questions that I would like to ask you. You are free to participate or not, and everything you say will be used for academic purposes only and high level of confidentiality will be assured. If you are willing to answer these questions, please let me know.

If yes, kindly let me know when we can meet or arrange for a call for you to answer the questions.

**THANKS**

**APPENDIX 5**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN**

**SECTION A: BACKGROUND**

**INFORMATION**

1. District of origin: .....
2. Division/sub-county: .....
3. School: .....
4. Class: .....

**Demographic Factors**

5. Sex:
  - i) Male
  - ii) Female
6. Age
  - i. 13
  - ii. 14
  - iii. 15
  - iv. 16
  - v. 17



7. Religion

i. Catholic

ii. Protestant

iii. Muslim

iv. Born Again

v. Other(specify): .....

**Section B: General**

**questions**

1. Have you heard of rights?

Yes  No

If yes, where did you get to hear about the rights?

.....

2. Do children also have rights?

Yes  No

If no, why

.....

3. What rights of children do you know?

.....

4. Have you received any form of training on children rights?

Yes  No

If yes, where was the training?

.....

5. What things/issues do children have a right to participate in?

.....

6. Have you received the opportunity to air your views concerning your career aspirations in this school?

.....

7. Should children be involved in decision making in this school regarding their career?

.....

8. Should children be involved in decision making in this school regarding their career?

Yes  No

If yes, which way?

.....

If no, why?

.....

9. Suggest ways how children involvement indecision making in respect of career can be improved in this school?

.....

10. What opportunities do you have to air your views in respect of your career aspirations at home?

.....

11. Should children be involved indecision making in career at home?

Yes  No

If yes, in which way?

.....

If no, why?

.....

12. Suggest ways how children involvement indecision making in career can be improved at home?

.....

**THANK YOU**

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENT

SECTION A:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1. District.....
- 2. Division/sub-county.....
- 3. Village: .....
- 4. Child's School: .....
- 5. Child's Class: .....

DEMOGRAPHICFACTORS

6. Sex:

- I. Male
- II. Female

7. Marital status:

- i. Single:
- ii. Married
- iii. Divorced
- iv. Never married

8. Religion:

- i. Catholic
- ii. Protestant
- iii. Muslim
- iv. Born Again
- v. Other (specify):.....

**Section B: General questions**

**Questions**

1. Have you heard of rights?

Yes  No

If yes, where did you get to hear about the rights?

.....

2. Do children also have rights?

Yes  No

If no, why

.....

3. What rights of children do you know?

.....

4. Have you received any form of training on children rights?

Yes  No

If yes, where was the training?

.....

5. What is your understanding of child right to participation in career?

.....

6. What opportunities do you give your child to be involved in making decisions on the career they intend to pursue?

.....

7. Should children be involved indecision making regarding their career at home?

Yes  No

If yes, in which way?

.....

If no, why?

.....

8. Suggest ways how children involvement indecision making in respect of career can be improved at home?

.....

9. Should children be involved in decision making in career at school too?

Yes  No

If yes in which way?

.....

If no, why?

.....

10. Suggest ways how children involvement indecision making in career can be improved at school?

.....

**THANK YOU**

**APPENDIX 7**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHER**

**SECTION A: BACKGROUND  
INFORMATION**

1. District: .....
2. School: .....
3. Title: .....
4. Subject Taught: .....

**Demographic factors**

5. Sex:

- i. Male
- ii. Female

6. Religion:

- i. Catholic
- ii. Moslem
- iii. Protestant
- iv. Born Again
- v. Other (Specify) .....

**SECTION B: Questions**

1. What is your understanding of right to participation?

.....

2. How do you conduct career guidance concerning the subject's children want to do in this school?

.....

3. Do children participate in making a choice of subjects they would like to pursue in their career?

Often  rarely  never  not sure

Either: If often, why?

.....

Or: If rarely, never or not sure, who then decides on the subjects they should pursue in this school?

.....

4. Have there been trainings conducted in the school on child rights, protection and participation in career?

Yes  No

if yes, how? .....

5. Do you think lack of child rights in participation limits you in involving children in decision making?

Yes  No



6. Is there a specific staff championing child protection and participation in this school?

Yes  No

7. In your own opinion, do you think the number of staff available in the school is sufficient to support child participation in activities?

Yes  No

8. Do you think staff capacity in child rights affects involvement of children in decision making?

Yes  No

If yes, how? .....

9. Does the school make deliberate effort to avail child friendly information materials?

Yes  No

If yes, what materials are available in child friendly formats?

.....

10. What do the children do when they have complaints in the school?

.....

11. Are there any specific child participation activities in this school?

Yes  No

12. Does the school have a suggestion box?

Yes  No

If yes, are the students utilizing it?

.....

If No, why?

.....

13. Are there decisions that you think learners should not be involved in at school?

Yes  No

If yes, mention them.

.....

14. Do you know any instruments/laws/policies guiding child participation in the country?

Yes  No

15. Do you have school policies guiding child participation in career?

.....

16. What challenges does the school face in involving children in decision making in career?

.....

17. Recommend ways in which involving children in career-decision can be improved?

.....

**THANK YOU**



8. If yes, mention them

.....

9. Are there decisions that you think children should be involved in at school?

Yes  No

If yes, mention them

.....

10. Do you think age is a determining factor for child participation in career?

Yes  No

If yes, what age would you recommend for a child to participate in career

.....

11. Do you know of any instruments/laws/policies guiding child participation in

the country? Yes  No

12. Are these instruments/laws/policies in line with those of the organization?

Yes  No

If no, where is the difference and what can be done for both your

organization and the government to have uniform

strategies.....

13. Have there been trainings conducted by your organization in schools on child

rights, protection and participation in career? Yes  No

If yes, how

.....

14. Have there been trainings conducted by your organization in the community on child rights, protection and participation in career? Yes  No

If yes, how

.....

15. Are these trainings in the local languages of a given community?

Yes  No

If No, why

.....

16. Are there factors limiting you from carrying out these trainings?

Yes  No

If yes, how

.....

17. What challenges do schools face in involving children in decision making?

.....

.....

18. Do you think culture is a contributing factor to child participation in Uganda?

.....

.....

19. Recommend ways in which involving children in decision making can be improved in Uganda?

.....S

**THANK YOU**