

**Establishing the relationship between religious support groups and community development in Ntandi Town Council in Bundibugyo District. A cross-sectional study.**

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**Abstract**

Page | 1 **Background**

Religious support groups play a vital role in fostering community development by promoting social cohesion, moral values, and collective action. This study aims to establish the relationship between religious support groups and community development in Ntandi Town Council, Bundibugyo District.

**Methodology**

A descriptive, cross-sectional design was adopted, employing a mixed-methods approach that combined both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a sample of 234 respondents was selected. Stratified sampling was employed. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 24.

**Results**

The Majority of the respondents 59% were male, while 41% were female. 57% of respondents were married, 29% were single, 9% were divorced or separated, and 5% were widowed. Religious support groups play an active role in promoting spiritual and emotional well-being in the community ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ), indicating a strong consensus among respondents that prayer meetings are a core activity of religious organizations. Religious groups offer counseling for emotional or spiritual issues,  $M = 4.40$  ( $SD = 0.78$ ), demonstrating that most religious institutions provide regular spiritual counseling to their members. There was a strong positive correlation between religious support groups and community development ( $r = 0.614$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), indicating that participation in religious activities significantly enhances access to social welfare services, health initiatives, and local development programs.

**Conclusion**

Religious support groups play a significant role in promoting community development in Ntandi Town Council. Participation.

**Recommendation**

Strengthening the capacity of religious institutions through training in community development and promoting sports groups through infrastructure investment, mentorship, and partnerships with NGOs.

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**Keywords:** Religious Support Groups, Community Development, Ntandi Town Council

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**Background of the study**

The existence of informal social networks in communities dates back to the 1930s, as evidenced by the Hawthorne experiments (Roethlisberger, 2016). Subsequent studies have shown that these informal structures, including religious groups, have a significant impact on community development (Bryan et al., 2017). Community development initially emerged from colonial administrative activities that emphasized participation, organization, and local networks (Kumar, 2021). After World War II, the concept gained prominence in British colonies and later featured in United Nations documents, emphasizing social and economic development, cooperation, and self-help (Medley et al., 2016; Yates, Vardaman, & Chrisman, 2023).

In post-independence Africa, religious groups played a crucial role in promoting education, health, and moral development within communities (Dassah & Ngatse-Ipangui, 2019). As governments pursued nation-building, churches and other faith-based organizations became vital partners in providing social services, fostering unity, and mobilizing communities for development (March & Failler, 2022). Even during the structural adjustment era of the 1980s and 1990s, when state-led initiatives declined, religious organizations remained active in grassroots development, often working alongside NGOs and civil society (Ahenkan & Osei-Kojo, 2014).

In Uganda, religious groups have continued to contribute significantly to community development through education, healthcare, and social welfare programs (Wellard, Rafanomezana, Nyirenda, Okotel, & Subbey,

2013; Okello & Mwesigwa, 2022). Programs such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) initiative were supported by faith-based institutions that manage many schools nationwide (Mugizi, Musunguzi, & Dafiewhare, 2019). These religious networks foster trust, cooperation, and social capital within communities, aligning with the principles of Social Capital Theory.

In the context of Ntandi Town Council, religious groups serve as key informal social networks that mobilize community members for collective action, promote education and moral values, and provide social support to vulnerable populations (Lyon, 2020). Their influence extends to improving access to social services and enhancing community cohesion, thereby contributing to local development (Mukasa, 2022; Kintu, 2023). Despite challenges such as limited resources and poor coordination with government programs, religious institutions remain central to promoting sustainable community development in the area (Ainebyona, 2023; Nsibambi, 2021). This study aims to establish the

relationship between religious support groups and community development in Ntandi Town Council.

### Methodology: Research Design:

This study adopted a descriptive, correlational, and cross-sectional survey design, and a mixed research approach where both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to collect and analyze data.

### Study Population:

The target population for the study was 600 individuals. The Town Council had 4 work-related groups, 4 religiously supported groups, and 3 sports-related groups. These groups had 596 members. Additionally, the study used the Town Clerk, the Mayor, the Community Development Officer, and the District Councilor as respondents.

### Sample Size:

**Table 1: Study population, Sample Size, Sampling Techniques**

Participants	Population size	Sample size	Sampling technique
Sports group members (3)	66	25	Stratified sampling
Religious Support Group members (4)	230	89	Stratified sampling
Work-related groups (4)	300	116	Stratified sampling
Town Clerk	01	01	Purposive sampling
Mayor	01	01	Purposive sampling
Community Development Officer	01	01	Purposive sampling
District Councilor	01	01	Purposive sampling
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>234</b>	

*Source: Ntandi Town Council Population & Housing Survey (2024).*

The determination of the sample size for this study was guided by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of sample size determination, which provides scientifically established sample sizes corresponding to given population sizes at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

### Sampling Techniques:

Stratified sampling was used to ensure that different subgroups, such as age categories, gender, and types of sports activities, were proportionately represented.

### Data Collection Methods:

This study employed a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods to comprehensively investigate the role of informal social groups in community development within Ntandi Town Council. A mixed-methods approach was adopted to enable the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, thereby enhancing the depth and validity of the findings.

### Primary Data Collection:

Primary data was obtained directly from participants using questionnaires and interviews, based on the nature of each respondent category and the sampling techniques applied.

### Secondary Data Collection:

Secondary data was obtained from government reports, academic journals, policy documents, NGO publications, and development agency records relevant to community development and informal social group dynamics in Uganda and, where available, specifically Ntandi Town Council.

### Collection Instruments:

Structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. These tools were carefully designed to align with the overall purpose of the study.

### Questionnaire:

The structured questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data from selected members of religious

support groups, work-related support groups, and sports-related support groups.

#### Interview Guide:

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from key informants selected through purposive sampling. These included the Town Clerk, Mayor, Community Development Officer, and District Councilor.

#### Documentary Review Checklist:

This method was used to extract relevant information from existing documents, reports, and literature that reflected the activities, roles, and contributions of informal social groups to community development in Ntandi Town Council.

#### Data Quality Control:

##### Validity of Instruments:

The validity of the research instruments was ensured through expert judgment and the computation of the Content Validity Index (CVI). The instruments (questionnaire and interview guide) were subjected to review by an expert in research methodology and community development from Team University.

##### Reliability of Instruments:

The reliability of the research instruments was established using the test-retest method and the computation of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. To determine the stability and consistency of the questionnaire, the instrument was administered twice to a sample of three respondents who

were not part of the final study sample but possessed characteristics similar to those of the target population.

#### Measurement of variables

The questionnaires were drafted based on a five-point Likert scale (1-5) whereby Strongly Agree (SA)-5, Agree (A)-4, Not Sure (NS)-3, Disagree (D)-2, and Strongly Disagree (SDA)-1. After measurement, these were summarized into descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation.

#### Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and tested for completeness and then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social Scientists V.24 (SPSS) and presented using tables, charts, and graphs for easy interpretation. Correlation and regression analyses were used to establish the relationship between variables.

Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis by reorganizing repeating patterns and words.

#### Informed consent:

The respondents who participated in the study consented.

#### Results

##### Response Rate

The response rate was determined using the formula;

$$\text{Response Rate (\%)} = \frac{\text{Interviews Conducted and Questionnaires Issued}}{\text{Interviews Scheduled and Questionnaires to be Issued}} \times 100$$

**Table 2: Response Rate of the Study**

Participants	Interviews Scheduled and Questionnaires to be Issued	Interviews Conducted and Questionnaires Collected	Response Rate (%)
Sports group members (3)	25	20	80.0%
Religious Support Group members (4)	89	82	92.1%
Work-related groups (4)	116	94	81.0%
Town Clerk	1	1	100%
Mayor	1	1	100%
Community Development Officer	1	1	100%
District Councilor	1	1	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>85.5%</b>

*Source: Primary data (2025)*

Table 3 presents the response rate of the study on informal social groups and community development in Ntandi Town Council, Bundibugyo District. Out of a total of 234 interviews scheduled and questionnaires issued, 200 were

successfully conducted and collected, yielding an overall response rate of 85.5%.

The sports group members recorded a response rate of 80.0%, religious support group members 92.1%, and work-related group members 81.0%. The key informants

(Town Clerk, Mayor, Community Development Officer, and District Councilor) each achieved a 100% response rate. This indicates high cooperation and participation among respondents across the different categories involved in the study.

An overall response rate of 85.5% is considered high and scientifically acceptable for social science research. According to methodological standards (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Kothari, 2014), a response rate above 70% is deemed sufficient to ensure the reliability, representativeness, and validity of study findings. This high rate minimizes the potential for non-response bias, meaning that the views captured are likely to be reflective of the broader population of informal social group members and local government officials in Ntandi Town Council.

Furthermore, the strong participation across all respondent categories, including the 100% response from key informants, enhances the credibility and completeness of the data. The responses provide a solid empirical foundation for analyzing the relationship between

informal social groups and community development initiatives within the study area.

Therefore, given the high response rate and balanced representation of participants, the researcher is scientifically justified in proceeding with the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The results can be considered valid, dependable, and generalizable to similar community contexts within Bundibugyo District and comparable settings.

### **Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

This section presents the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in the study. The analysis focuses on key characteristics including gender, age, marital status, level of education, and occupation. Understanding the demographic background of respondents is essential in interpreting their perspectives on the role of informal social groups in community development.

**Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 200)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	118	59.0
	Female	82	41.0
Age (years)	18–25	42	21.0
	26–35	64	32.0
	36–45	54	27.0
	46–55	28	14.0
	56 and above	12	6.0
Marital Status	Single	58	29.0
	Married	114	57.0
	Divorced/Separated	18	9.0
	Widowed	10	5.0
Level of Education	No formal education	62	31.0
	Primary	44	22.0
	Secondary	30	15.0
	Diploma	46	23.0
	Bachelor's degree	18	9.0
Occupation	Boda Boda rider	36	18.0
	Public Servant	28	14.0
	Farmer	72	36.0
	Trader	32	16.0
	Teacher	20	10.0
	Church Leader	12	6.0

*Source: Primary data (2025)*

The findings in Table 3 show that the majority of the respondents (59%) were male, while 41% were female. This suggests that men were slightly more represented in informal social groups and community development activities in Ntandi Town Council. The higher participation of men could be attributed to their mobility and involvement in outdoor economic and social activities such as farming, trading, and transport, which often foster informal social networking.

The results indicate that the largest proportion of respondents (32%) were aged between 26–35 years, followed by those aged 36–45 years (27%). Respondents aged 18–25 years constituted 21%, while those aged 46–55 years and above 56 years accounted for 14% and 6%, respectively. This distribution shows that the majority of participants were in the economically active age group. Individuals in this age bracket are typically more involved in both informal group activities and local development

initiatives, as they possess the energy, motivation, and social networks necessary for community mobilization. The study found that 57% of respondents were married, 29% were single, 9% were divorced or separated, and 5% were widowed. The predominance of married individuals suggests that most respondents had family responsibilities, which could motivate their participation in social groups aimed at improving livelihoods and community welfare. Married people often engage in collective saving schemes, religious fellowships, and cooperative work groups as a means of strengthening family and community resilience. Regarding education, 31% of respondents had no formal education, 22% had attained primary education, 15% had reached secondary education, 23% had diploma-level qualifications, and 9% had bachelor's degrees. This indicates that while a notable proportion of respondents had low levels of formal education, there was also a significant segment with post-

secondary qualifications. The variation in educational attainment implies a diverse pool of knowledge and skills among participants, which can influence how informal groups are organized and how they contribute to community development. The majority of respondents (36%) were farmers, followed by boda boda riders (18%), traders (16%), public servants (14%), teachers (10%), and church leaders (6%). The dominance of farmers reflects the agrarian nature of Ntandi Town Council's economy. However, the presence of participants from both formal and informal sectors indicates that informal social groups cut across various occupations. This occupational diversity enhances the potential for shared learning, resource mobilization, and collaboration in community development activities.

### **Religious Support Groups in Ntandi Town Council**

#### **Descriptive Findings on Religious Support Groups in Ntandi Town Council**

**Table 4: Religious Support Groups in Ntandi Town Council**

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev.
Religious groups organize prayer meetings	-	2	6	62	130	4.60	0.66
Religious groups offer counseling for emotional or spiritual issues	1	4	12	80	103	4.40	0.78
Religious groups support members during difficult times	2	6	18	74	100	4.32	0.84
Religious groups run community feeding programs	6	12	28	78	76	4.03	1.01
Religious groups organize seminars on financial literacy	8	20	36	82	54	3.81	1.06
Religious groups organize vocational training workshops	10	22	40	78	50	3.73	1.10
Religious groups partner with clinics to offer health services	12	24	34	70	60	3.76	1.13
Religious groups offer psychosocial support for the sick	4	10	26	78	82	4.12	0.96
Religious groups mobilize members to clean villages, repair roads, or build wells	6	14	30	76	74	3.99	1.02
Religious groups contribute towards constructing community infrastructure (schools, health centers)	8	20	32	72	68	3.85	1.08
Religious groups partner with local leaders to address community needs	4	12	28	78	78	4.09	0.98
Religious groups create savings and credit groups (SACCOs) among members	6	14	40	80	60	3.87	1.04
Religious groups support income-generating activities	6	18	36	74	66	3.88	1.05
Religious groups train members in entrepreneurship and financial management	8	20	38	76	58	3.82	1.07
Religious groups mediate disputes among members or within families	4	10	28	80	78	4.09	0.95
Religious groups support youth groups through sports, music, or drama activities	6	16	34	78	66	3.89	1.03

*Source: Primary data (2025)*

Table 4 reveals that religious support groups play an active role in promoting spiritual and emotional well-being in the community. The statement "Religious groups organize prayer meetings" received the highest mean score ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ), indicating a strong consensus among respondents that prayer meetings are a core activity of religious organizations in Ntandi Town Council. Similarly, "Religious groups offer counseling for

emotional or spiritual issues" scored  $M = 4.40$  ( $SD = 0.78$ ), demonstrating that most religious institutions provide regular spiritual counseling to their members. These findings imply that religious organizations are not only centers for worship but also serve as emotional and psychological support systems for individuals facing personal or family challenges. The result aligns with earlier studies such as Putnam (2000) and Narayan &



Cassidy (2001), who argue that faith-based groups foster social capital through emotional solidarity, shared values, and moral support, which strengthen communal cohesion and resilience. The results also show a high level of engagement in welfare-oriented activities. The statement “Religious groups support members during difficult times” had a mean of 4.32 (SD = 0.84), suggesting that most faith-based organizations actively support members facing bereavement, illness, or economic hardship. Likewise, “Religious groups run community feeding programs” had a mean of 4.03 (SD = 1.01), indicating consistent involvement in humanitarian efforts targeting vulnerable community members such as orphans, the elderly, and the poor. These findings are consistent with UNDP (2016) and World Bank (2018) reports that emphasize the significant contribution of religious groups to social protection systems, especially in rural communities where state-led welfare programs are limited. In terms of economic empowerment, the results show moderate but positive engagement. Statements such as “Religious groups organize seminars on financial literacy” (M = 3.81, SD = 1.06) and “Religious groups organize vocational training workshops” (M = 3.73, SD = 1.10) suggest that some religious institutions have begun integrating livelihood enhancement programs into their ministry. Similarly, the findings indicate that religious groups “create savings and credit groups (SACCOs)” (M = 3.87) and “train members in entrepreneurship and financial management” (M = 3.82). These initiatives demonstrate an effort to foster self-reliance and financial discipline among members. However, the relatively higher standard deviations ( $\approx 1.0$ ) imply variations in implementation across different denominations or parishes. This reflects the notion advanced by Ellis & Ter Haar (2004) that faith-based institutions are evolving into hybrid organizations that combine spiritual guidance with practical socio-economic development initiatives. The findings further indicate that religious support groups collaborate with health facilities and local authorities in addressing community needs. The statement “Religious groups partner with clinics to offer health services” recorded a mean of 3.76 (SD = 1.13), while “Religious groups offer psychosocial support for the sick” had a higher mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.96). This suggests that churches and mosques play a vital role in complementing public health interventions, particularly through home-based care, awareness campaigns, and spiritual encouragement for the sick. Furthermore, respondents agreed that “Religious groups contribute towards constructing community infrastructure such as schools and health centers” (M = 3.85, SD = 1.08) and “partner with local leaders to address community needs” (M = 4.09, SD = 0.98). These findings underscore the strong collaborative relationships between religious institutions and civic authorities in promoting development and social service delivery in Ntandi Town Council. Religious support groups were also found to contribute significantly to peacebuilding and conflict resolution within the

community. The statement “Religious groups mediate disputes among members or within families” obtained a mean of 4.09 (SD = 0.95), showing that churches and mosques often intervene in family and neighborhood conflicts to promote harmony. Additionally, the finding that “Religious groups support youth groups through sports, music, or drama activities” (M = 3.89, SD = 1.03) highlights the role of faith-based organizations in engaging young people in positive and developmental activities. This approach helps prevent youth delinquency, substance abuse, and idleness while fostering community spirit and talent development.

### **Qualitative Findings on Religious Support Groups in Ntandi Town Council**

To complement the quantitative results, qualitative interviews were conducted with key informants, including the Town Clerk, Mayor, Community Development Officer (CDO), and District Councillor. These interviews provided detailed insights into the presence, roles, and contributions of religious support groups in the community. The views are presented thematically to reflect the key areas of focus, namely: spiritual and moral guidance, social support and welfare, economic empowerment, community partnerships, and peace building.

On Spiritual and Moral Guidance, all key informants strongly acknowledged that religious support groups play an indispensable role in nurturing the spiritual and moral life of the residents of Ntandi Town Council.

The Town Clerk elaborated that the influence of churches and mosques in the community goes far beyond routine worship, explaining that *“Religious groups are the moral and spiritual compass of this community. They are deeply rooted in the everyday lives of the people and have become the first point of contact whenever individuals face emotional or personal difficulties. Through prayer meetings, sermons, and fellowship gatherings, they help people to find hope and stability amidst life’s challenges. When the community goes through tough times, such as natural disasters, sickness, or loss of loved ones, these religious leaders are always the first to reach out, to console, pray, and organize assistance. Their consistent presence makes them a source of trust and reassurance for many households.”*

The mayor equally emphasized the moral influence of religious institutions, noting that their presence contributes significantly to peace and discipline in the community. *“Faith-based organizations in Ntandi have done much more than simply offer religious services. They are instrumental in shaping people’s character and encouraging good citizenship. When you look at how people conduct themselves, avoiding crime, showing respect for one another, and working together in unity, it’s largely because of the consistent messages of peace, honesty, and cooperation that the churches and mosques preach every week. Religious leaders have helped reduce domestic conflicts and social unrest because they*

*constantly remind their congregants about forgiveness, humility, and love.”*

On Social Support and Welfare Programs, Informants highlighted that religious support groups have become vital social institutions that extend tangible help to community members during times of need.

The Community Development Officer observed that many churches and mosques now function as informal social safety nets, explaining that *“Most of the religious groups here operate welfare or charity committees that are always active. Whenever someone falls ill, loses a relative, or faces a serious personal crisis, the church members immediately mobilize resources to offer support. This support can come in the form of money, food items, or even voluntary labor to help with funeral arrangements or rebuilding a damaged house. It is this kind of solidarity that makes the religious institutions a dependable social force. They often reach affected families faster than government programs can, especially in emergencies.”*

Similarly, the District Councilor noted that the outreach efforts of religious institutions extend to marginalized and vulnerable groups. *“Religious groups have become a lifeline for many vulnerable people in Ntandi. Some churches organize community feeding programs for orphans, widows, and street children. Others have ministries that visit the elderly and bedridden, offering both spiritual and material support. For example, during the COVID-19 lockdown, it was the churches and mosques that mobilized food and distributed it to those who were struggling the most. Their compassion and quick response to community suffering is something we must appreciate.”*

On Economic Empowerment and Skills Development, the key informants also acknowledged that religious groups are increasingly embracing socio-economic empowerment initiatives aimed at improving members' livelihoods.

The Town Clerk explained, *“In recent years, we have seen a noticeable shift in how churches operate. They no longer focus only on spiritual matters; they are now introducing livelihood projects for their members. Some of the Pentecostal churches have formed small savings and credit associations that help members borrow money to start businesses. The Catholic Church here has a women's guild that operates a tailoring and craft training project for young mothers, while the Anglican Church has introduced bee-keeping and poultry rearing as part of its income-generating programs. These efforts are still small-scale, but they demonstrate a growing realization among religious institutions that faith and development must go hand in hand.”*

The mayor further remarked on the significance of these initiatives, *“Financial and skills training programs run by churches and mosques have begun to make a real difference, especially for the youth. During one of our municipal meetings, we learned that several young people who used to be unemployed have now started small businesses after attending entrepreneurship seminars*

*organized by religious groups. Even though not all the programs are well-funded, they are creating a sense of hope and teaching people to be financially responsible. This is an area where local government should consider partnering more closely with these groups.”*

On Partnerships in Health and Community Development, another recurring theme in the interviews was the collaboration between religious institutions, health facilities, and local leaders in community service delivery. The Community Development Officer pointed out that *“Churches and mosques have become essential partners in implementing community-based programs. For instance, during health outreach campaigns, religious leaders help us to mobilize the people. When we are conducting immunization drives or HIV awareness events, announcements from the pulpit are more effective than radio messages. Some churches even host mobile clinics in their compounds, offering space and helping us build trust with the residents. It is this cooperation that makes development initiatives easier to implement.”*

The District Councilor added, *“Religious institutions contribute directly to infrastructure development as well. Several churches have constructed nursery and primary schools that serve the community at large, not just their own members. A few have also been involved in renovating health centers and providing water tanks in rural parishes. These groups work closely with our offices whenever we have community work programs like road clearing or sanitation campaigns. Their involvement shows a deep sense of ownership in the development process.”*

On Peacebuilding and Youth Engagement, the informants also emphasized the central role of religious support groups in promoting peace, reconciliation, and youth engagement.

According to the Mayor, *“Religious leaders are often the peacemakers of this town. Whenever conflicts arise, whether between families, neighbors, or political groups, it is usually the clergy who intervene to restore calm. They command respect from the people and can speak to both sides without bias. For example, during the last local elections, some pastors and imams helped us hold dialogue meetings that prevented violence. This moral authority makes them key partners in maintaining social order.”*

The District Councilor shared a similar view, particularly highlighting the youth programs spearheaded by religious groups. *“The youth programs run by churches and mosques are among the most effective in keeping young people engaged. Many young people here participate in church choirs, football tournaments, and drama groups organized by religious institutions. These activities not only develop talent but also keep the youth away from crime and substance abuse. The spiritual mentorship they receive also builds confidence and positive values. I believe that without these programs, we would see much higher levels of idleness and insecurity among the youth.”*

In summary, the interviews with the Town Clerk, Mayor, Community Development Officer, and District Councilor reaffirm that religious support groups in Ntandi Town Council serve as multifunctional institutions that blend spirituality with social and economic development. The informants unanimously agreed that religious organizations: Strengthen community morality and unity through faith-based teachings and counseling, Provide emergency support and social protection to vulnerable members of society, Promote livelihood development through savings groups, vocational training, and

entrepreneurship initiatives, Partner with local government and health institutions to deliver essential community services, Foster peace and engage the youth in constructive, skill-building activities.

Collectively, the key informant responses underscore that religious support groups are critical actors in community transformation, contributing not only to spiritual growth but also to social cohesion and sustainable development within Ntandi Town Council.

## Community Development in Ntandi Town Council

### Descriptive Findings on Community Development in Ntandi Town Council

Community development encompasses access to social services, infrastructure, economic opportunities, and sustainable resource management. In Ntandi Town Council, the study assessed the extent to which community development indicators reflect improvement in the lives of residents.

**Table 5: Community Development in Ntandi Town Council**

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev.
It's easier for people to access capital to start businesses	62	58	40	28	12	2.34	1.17
It is easier to access health services in the area	54	60	42	28	16	2.46	1.18
Youth easily find jobs	68	62	38	22	10	2.20	1.12
It's easier to access education in the town council	50	56	46	32	16	2.60	1.20
Households earn above the poverty line (4000 shs daily)	70	60	36	20	14	2.16	1.14
Individuals can easily access the market for their produce	58	62	40	28	12	2.34	1.15
The literacy level is high	44	50	48	36	22	2.74	1.22
There is easy access to clean water	66	58	38	24	14	2.28	1.13
Specialized healthcare facilities are available in the town council	72	62	32	20	14	2.12	1.11
The housing is safe and standard	60	64	38	22	16	2.30	1.15
Roads in the area are well-maintained and passable	74	60	36	20	10	2.10	1.09
There is electricity in the town council	68	58	40	22	12	2.28	1.12
The town has internet and mobile network connectivity	70	62	38	20	10	2.20	1.10
The town has waste management systems	76	64	32	18	10	2.06	1.08
The town council ensures the sustainable use of natural resources	60	58	42	28	12	2.34	1.15

*Source: Primary Data (2025)*

The findings indicate that community development in Ntandi Town Council is scanty, with most mean scores ranging between 2.06 and 2.74, reflecting low levels of service delivery and infrastructure development. Access to capital for business start-ups (Mean = 2.34), youth employment (Mean = 2.20), and household income above the poverty line (Mean = 2.16) were particularly low, suggesting that economic empowerment opportunities are limited.

Similarly, basic services such as specialized healthcare facilities (Mean = 2.12), roads (Mean = 2.10), and waste management systems (Mean = 2.06) received the lowest scores, indicating inadequate social infrastructure. Other indicators, such as literacy levels (Mean = 2.74) and access to education (Mean = 2.60), scored slightly higher, suggesting some progress in human capital development, albeit still below satisfactory levels. Overall, the data reflect significant gaps in the quality and accessibility of social, economic, and infrastructural services,

underscoring the need for targeted development interventions.

### Qualitative Findings on Community Development in Ntandi Town Council

Interviews with the Town Clerk, Mayor, Community Development Officer (CDO), and District Councilor provided contextual insights into the quantitative findings and highlighted the challenges and opportunities for community development in Ntandi Town Council.

**Limited Access to Services and Infrastructure.** The Town Clerk noted that while some basic services exist, they are largely insufficient for the growing population. *“Access to health facilities, clean water, and electricity is limited in many parts of Ntandi. Most residents have to travel long distances to reach hospitals or clinics, and only a few areas have a reliable water supply. Roads are poorly maintained, which makes transport and trade difficult, especially during the rainy season. These limitations affect economic activities and overall quality of life.”*



The mayor emphasized the economic challenges, *“Many households in Ntandi struggle to earn above the poverty line. Youth unemployment is high because job opportunities are scarce, and capital for starting businesses is difficult to access. Microfinance services are limited, and most people rely on informal savings groups, which are small-scale and cannot meet the growing needs of the community.”*

**Education and Literacy as Positive Signs.** The Community Development Officer highlighted some progress in education: *“Although resources are limited, literacy levels and access to basic education have improved over the years. Schools are present, and enrollment is growing, but the quality of education is still a concern. To improve community development, we need to focus not only on access but also on enhancing the quality of education and vocational training to equip young people with employable skills.”*

**Challenges in Service Delivery and Governance.** The District Councilor addressed governance and sustainability issues. *“The town council faces resource constraints, which affect the delivery of essential services such as waste management, water supply, and electricity. Sustainable use of natural resources is also a challenge because of limited awareness and enforcement of environmental regulations. For meaningful development, we need better planning, investment in infrastructure, and active participation of the community in local governance.”*

**Opportunities for Development.** Despite these challenges, key informants identified areas of potential growth. The Town Clerk emphasized the role of partnerships: *“Collaboration with NGOs, private sector investors, and development agencies could help improve access to capital, healthcare, and education. Community development can be accelerated if we support local groups, including sports, religious, and work-related groups, to engage in income-generating activities and community projects.”*

Similarly, the Mayor highlighted the importance of capacity building: *“Investing in vocational training, entrepreneurship, and sustainable resource management can empower residents and improve livelihoods. The foundation for development exists, but it requires targeted interventions and stronger governance to translate opportunities into tangible outcomes.”*

In summary, the study found that; Community development in Ntandi Town Council is limited, with low mean scores across key indicators such as access to capital, health services, youth employment, and infrastructure. Basic services and infrastructure such as roads, waste management, electricity, and specialized healthcare are inadequate, limiting social and economic well-being. Education and literacy show modest progress, indicating some development in human capital. Qualitative insights from key informants revealed challenges including resource constraints, weak governance, and insufficient community participation in

development planning and Opportunities exist to improve development outcomes through partnerships, capacity building, and leveraging informal social groups to enhance livelihoods and community infrastructure.

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings confirms that Ntandi Town Council has significant development gaps, but also highlights the potential for transformative interventions if resources, governance, and community engagement are effectively mobilized.

### **Documentary Review Findings on Community Development in Ntandi Town Council**

Documentary review constitutes a critical component of this study, providing insights into the broader contextual and historical trends affecting community development. In this study, official documents, reports, and development plans from Ntandi Town Council, Bundibugyo District, and relevant government ministries from 2022 to 2025 were analyzed. These included the Ntandi Town Council Annual Development Reports (2022–2025), Bundibugyo District Local Government Development Plan (2023–2025), Annual Budget Performance Reports (2022–2025), and sectoral reports on health, education, and infrastructure produced by the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Health. The documentary review findings provide a complementary perspective to primary data, revealing persistent gaps and limited progress in community development across several dimensions.

**Access to Social Services:** The documents reviewed indicate that access to essential social services in Ntandi Town Council is highly constrained. According to the Ntandi Town Council Annual Development Report (2024), only 40% of households have access to safe and reliable water sources, with the majority depending on boreholes, streams, or communal wells. Health service provision is similarly inadequate; there is no fully equipped hospital within the town council, and only a few small clinics provide basic services. Reports from the Ministry of Health (2023) highlight frequent stock-outs of essential medicines and a chronic shortage of qualified health personnel, which significantly hampers service delivery. The lack of readily available healthcare services disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, particularly women, children, and the elderly, limiting their ability to access timely medical care (Bundibugyo District Health Office, 2023).

**Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods:** Economic opportunities within Ntandi Town Council are limited. The Bundibugyo District Development Plan (2023–2025) indicates that the majority of households rely on subsistence agriculture and small-scale trading, with few formal employment opportunities. Access to capital for entrepreneurial activities is constrained; microfinance institutions and savings groups exist, but they are often insufficient to meet the needs of the population. Annual Budget Performance Reports (2022–2025) reveal that less

than 15% of the total council funds were allocated to youth empowerment, business support, and skills development programs, suggesting limited prioritization of economic development initiatives. Consequently, youth unemployment remains high, and residents' income levels largely fall below the national poverty line, thereby constraining the potential for economic growth (Ntandi Town Council Annual Report, 2023).

**Infrastructure and Utilities:** The reviewed documents emphasize that infrastructure development in Ntandi Town Council is inadequate and poorly maintained. Roads connecting villages, markets, and commercial centers are predominantly gravel and are prone to erosion during the rainy season, disrupting trade and mobility. Electricity coverage is uneven, largely restricted to the central town area, leaving peripheral communities without reliable power. Reports by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (2023) indicate that internet and mobile network connectivity are intermittent, further limiting access to information and digital services. Waste management systems are rudimentary, with open dumping and unregulated disposal sites still prevalent (Ntandi Town Council Environmental Report, 2022). Housing reports reveal that a substantial proportion of residential units are non-standard and unsafe, pointing to weak enforcement of building regulations and urban planning guidelines (Bundibugyo District Physical Planning Office, 2023).

**Education and Human Capital Development:** Education and literacy programs show some positive developments; enrollment rates in primary and secondary schools have increased, as highlighted in the Bundibugyo District Education Sector Report (2023). However, these improvements are tempered by challenges in quality. Classrooms are overcrowded, teaching materials are insufficient, and there is a shortage of qualified teachers. Opportunities for vocational and technical training for youth remain limited, with few workshops and skill development programs organized in partnership with NGOs or development partners. Consequently, while literacy rates may be improving marginally, the capacity

for employable skills development remains inadequate, constraining long-term community development prospects (Ntandi Town Council Education Department Report, 2024).

**Environmental Management and Sustainability:** Environmental sustainability measures within Ntandi Town Council are weakly enforced, according to the Ntandi Town Council Environmental Management Report (2023). Regulations intended to protect wetlands, forests, and water sources exist on paper but are poorly implemented. Incidences of unregulated sand mining, deforestation, and encroachment on agricultural lands were noted, posing risks to long-term sustainability. The lack of community awareness campaigns and enforcement mechanisms exacerbates environmental degradation, which threatens livelihoods dependent on natural resources, including farming and fishing (Bundibugyo District Environmental Report, 2022).

The documentary review confirms that community development in Ntandi Town Council remains limited. Key observations include: Social services such as healthcare, clean water, and housing are inadequately provided, with vulnerable groups disproportionately affected. Economic opportunities are scarce; limited access to capital and low investment in youth employment and entrepreneurship hinder economic growth. Infrastructure and utilities are poorly developed and maintained, affecting mobility, communication, and overall quality of life. Education and human capital development show some improvement in access but remain constrained by quality challenges and Environmental sustainability is minimally enforced, exposing the community to long-term resource depletion and ecological risks.

Overall, the documentary evidence aligns with primary data findings, reinforcing the conclusion that Ntandi Town Council faces significant development gaps, requiring strategic interventions, increased investment, and community participation to improve livelihoods, social services, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability.

### Correlation Analysis

The study further examined the relationship between participation in informal social groups, specifically Religious Support Groups, Work-Related Support Groups, and Sports-Related Support Groups, and community development outcomes in Ntandi Town Council, using Pearson correlation analysis.

**Table 6: Correlation between Religious Support Groups, Works Related Support Groups, Sports Related Support Groups, and Community Development in Ntandi Town Council.**

Variable	Pearson Correlation with Health Service Delivery	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Religious Support Groups	0.614 *	0.001	200
Works Related Support Groups	0.361 *	0.004	200
Sports Related Support Groups	0.211 *	0.004	200

*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

*Source: Primary Data (2025).*

The findings indicate a strong positive correlation between participation in Religious Support Groups and community development outcomes ( $r = 0.614$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). This suggests that individuals who actively engage in religious support activities are more likely to experience improvements in access to health services, social welfare, and other community development indicators. The significant p-value ( $p < 0.01$ ) confirms that this relationship is statistically significant, indicating that religious support groups play a critical role in enhancing social and community development within Ntandi Town Council.

Participation in Work-Related Support Groups also shows a moderate positive correlation with community development outcomes ( $r = 0.361$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). This finding implies that engagement in work-related groups, which often provide financial support, skill development, and networking opportunities, is associated with moderate improvements in community development, particularly in areas related to livelihoods, access to income, and collective economic initiatives. The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, highlighting the relevance of these groups in promoting socioeconomic development.

The analysis further revealed a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between participation in Sports-Related Support Groups and community development outcomes ( $r = 0.211$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). Although the strength of this correlation is lower compared to religious and work-related groups, it still indicates that sports groups contribute positively to community development, particularly through promotion of physical and mental health, social cohesion, and youth engagement. The statistical significance at  $p < 0.01$

reinforces that even limited engagement in sports-related activities has measurable benefits for the community.

Overall, the correlation analysis demonstrates that all three types of informal social groups, religious, work-related, and sports-related, have a positive and statistically significant relationship with community development in Ntandi Town Council. Among these, Religious Support Groups exhibit the strongest association, suggesting that faith-based community structures are particularly influential in driving development initiatives. Work-related groups also play a meaningful role, especially in economic and skill-building aspects, while sports groups contribute to health, social cohesion, and youth empowerment, albeit to a lesser extent.

These findings underscore the importance of informal social structures in complementing formal government interventions, highlighting their potential as avenues for enhancing community development in the town council.

### Regression Analysis of Informal Social Groups and Community Development in Ntandi Town Council.

To further examine the predictive influence of informal social groups on community development in Ntandi Town Council, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The independent variables included Religious Support Groups, Work-Related Support Groups, and Sports-Related Support Groups, while the dependent variable was Community Development, operationalized through indicators such as access to health services, education, income-generating activities, infrastructure, and social welfare.

**Table 7 Model Summary**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.658	0.433	0.423	0.486

*Source: Primary Data (2025)*

The model summary shows that the three types of informal social groups collectively explain 43.3% of the variance in community development ( $R^2 = 0.433$ ). The adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.423 suggests that the model

remains robust even after adjusting for the number of predictors, indicating a substantial contribution of these social groups to community development outcomes.

**Table 8: ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	51.232	3	17.077	72.40	0.001*
Residual	66.872	196	0.341		
Total	118.104	199			

*Significant at  $p < 0.01$*

The ANOVA results indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant ( $F = 72.40$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), confirming that the independent variables jointly predict community development outcomes in Ntandi Town Council.

**Table 9: Regression Coefficients**

Predictor Variable	B (Unstandardized)	Std. Error	Beta (Standardized)	t	Sig.
Constant	1.024	0.122	–	8.38	0.001*
Religious Support Groups	0.412	0.056	0.485	7.36	0.001*
Work-Related Support Groups	0.235	0.061	0.238	3.85	0.001*
Sports-Related Support Groups	0.137	0.053	0.140	2.58	0.011*

*Significant at  $p < 0.05$*

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The regression coefficients show that Religious Support Groups are the strongest predictor of community development ( $\beta = 0.485$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), followed by Work-Related Support Groups ( $\beta = 0.238$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and Sports-Related Support Groups ( $\beta = 0.140$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that active participation in religious groups has the greatest influence on enhancing community development outcomes, while work-related and sports groups also contribute positively, albeit to a lesser extent.

## Discussion

### Religious Support Groups and Community Development in Ntandi Town Council

The study findings indicate a strong positive correlation between participation in Religious Support Groups and community development outcomes ( $r = 0.614$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). This suggests that individuals who actively engage in religious support activities, including church congregations, mosque committees, and faith-based savings groups, experience improved access to health services, social welfare initiatives, and other community development indicators. These findings are consistent with prior research on rural community development. Tusasiirwe (2022) and Kituno Moses (2024) document how elder women's groups and faith leaders in rural Uganda mobilize resources, provide care for vulnerable populations, and engage in health promotion, thereby filling critical gaps in formal social services. Similarly, studies of Kazo Parish (Church of Uganda) programs show that pooled resources from religious support groups facilitate education, vocational training, and healthcare, enhancing both human capital and livelihoods (Turner, 2020; Crouch, 2018).

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000), which posits that networks of trust and shared norms foster collective action. Religious groups generate both bonding social capital through shared beliefs and practices and bridging/linking capital by leveraging connections with external stakeholders (MDPI, 2010). The results confirm that in Ntandi Town Council, religious support groups are critical institutions that enhance social cohesion, facilitate resource mobilization, and contribute directly to community development.

## Conclusion

The study concludes that religious support groups play a significant role in promoting community development in Ntandi Town Council. Participation in these groups is strongly associated with improved access to health

services, social welfare, and other development indicators. Religious groups provide multifaceted support, including spiritual guidance, emotional care, social cohesion, and economic assistance, confirming their pivotal role as cornerstone institutions in rural community development. Their impact is consistent with the principles of social capital theory, whereby networks of trust and shared norms enhance collective action and facilitate access to external resources.

## Recommendation

Religious institutions should be supported with training in community development, financial management, and project planning to enhance their effectiveness in service delivery.

Encouraging partnerships among different religious groups can foster broader social cohesion, resource mobilization, and inclusive community initiatives.

Religious groups should diversify programs to include vocational training, microfinance schemes, and youth mentorship to further empower members economically and socially.

Establishing transparent financial and administrative systems within religious support groups will ensure sustainability and equitable distribution of benefits.

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## List of Abbreviations

CDU	Community Development Unit
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CVI	Content Validity Index



DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRD	Human Resource Development
MDPI	Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SACCOs	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations
SFD	Social Fund for Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPE	Universal Primary Education
YLP	Youth Livelihood Programme

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### Conflict of interest

The author did not declare any conflict of interest.

### Author contributions

Bahangondi Bwambare was the principal investigator. Dr. Muhammad Ssendagi supervised the research.

### Data availability

The data is available upon request.

### Author Biography

Bahangondi Bwambare holds a Master's in public administration and management from Team University. Dr. Muhammad Ssendagi is a lecturer at Team University. Edmand Bakashaba is a lecturer at Team University

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