

# UNDERSTANDING COLLABORATION IN THE TANZANIAN CONTEXT: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

A Report for the Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa  
(ALiVE) Project

This report is a product of the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI). RELI, through the Values and Life Skills (VaLi) thematic group, aimed to collaborate with local leaders to cocreate and develop contextualized assessments in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The RELI project, Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE), has three main objectives: (a) develop contextualized, open-source tools for the assessment of life skills and values in the East African context; (b) generate large-scale data on life skills and values across the three countries; and (c) use this data to inform change and build capacities within the VaLi-ALiVE member organizations.

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## 1 OVERVIEW OF THE ALiVE PROJECT

### 1.1 Brief Description of the Project

The Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI), through the Values and Life Skills (VaLi) thematic group, intends to collaborate with local leaders to cocreate and develop contextualized assessments in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. The initiative, Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE), has three objectives: gathering information (and knowledge), building community, and advocacy. These three broad objectives mirror RELI's three pillars: being a hub for knowledge, transforming member organizations, and influencing policy. Over three years (2020–2023), ALiVE will do the following: (a) develop contextualized, open-source tools to assess life skills and values in the East African context; (b) generate large-scale data on life skills and values across the three countries; and (c) use this data to inform change and build capacities within the VaLi-ALiVE member organizations. These organizations will advocate for the three national education systems to focus on and produce these competencies, to inform regional policy throughout the East African Community, and to inform global thinking on how to measure life skills and values as *relevant and effective* learning outcomes.

ALiVE will be a context-relevant, summative assessment. The assessment will target adolescent boys and girls from ages 13 through 17 years, both in school and out of school, focusing on three competencies and one value: *self-awareness*, *problem solving*, *collaboration*, and *respect*. Embracing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) spirit of *leaving no one behind*, the initiative will conduct the assessment at the household level. The aspiration is that this will be a simple and easy-to-use tool, making it feasible and affordable to conduct an assessment on a national scale.

The first phase in developing the contextualized assessment tools was to conduct ethnographic interviews across the three countries with three categories of informants: adolescents, parents, and key persons such as teachers, social workers, youth patrons or matrons, and others. The interviews were to gauge participant perceptions and understandings of the selected ALiVE competencies: *self-awareness*, *collaboration*, *problem solving*, and *respect*.

### 1.2 The General Objective of the Contextualisation Study

The study was to achieve a contextualised understanding of *collaboration* in Tanzania to determine the skill structure and derive the best tools for a large-scale assessment of *collaboration* in the three countries.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- (i) How do adolescents, parents, and other key actors in Tanzania define and understand *collaboration*?
- (ii) How do the common definitions differ across the participants' categories (adolescents, parents, and key persons), genders, and locations?
- (iii) Which subskills emerge from the common understanding of this skill, and how do they vary across the participants' categories, genders, and locations?
- (iv) What are the common dispositions and values identified by the different categories of the participants based on gender and location?
- (v) Which support systems and other factors help the adolescents develop *collaboration* skills?
- (vi) What are the common methods identified and used by the participants to assess *collaboration* skills in adolescents?

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Study Design

Since the purpose of this study is to learn about and reflect on a certain social group's way of life and understanding, a qualitative approach and an ethnographic design was adopted to explore and collect participants' perceptions and understandings of the selected ALiVE competence in the local context of Tanzania. Ethnography is a widely used research tradition in the social sciences. It can be defined as the study of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within social groups, teams, organizations, and communities (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Therefore, the ultimate goal of this tradition is to analyse and form a detailed understanding of the particularities of a given social group. That is why we considered this the most appropriate design in conducting the present study.

### 2.2 Study Sites

The study was conducted in 5 districts of Tanzania, which were sampled on the basis of their status as rural or urban, their economic activity (pastoralist, core-urban, agricultural), and their distance from Dar es Salaam. Two villages in each district were randomly sampled. Table 1 summarizes the five locations.

*Table 1: Data Collection Regions, Sites, and Selection Criteria*

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>REGION AND DISTRICT</b>
Core urban characteristics, low-income areas within the capital city	Region: Dar es salaam District: Ilala
Core rural characteristics, agriculture-rich, and within 100 km of the capital city	Region: Morogoro District: Mvomero
Core rural characteristics, agriculture-rich, 300–400 km from the capital city	Region: Tabora District: Uyui
Core rural characteristics, pastoralist areas, 400–800 km from the capital city	Region: Arusha District: Ngorongoro
With different characteristics from all mentioned above	Region: Zanzibar District: North-A

### 2.3 Study Population

The study population consisted of adolescent boys and girls from 13 through 17 years of age (both in and out of school), parents, and key persons (people close to the adolescents such as teachers, social workers, youth patrons or matrons in religious communities, and others).

Given that the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic period, researchers specifically selected districts in which RELI members were working, due to ease of contact, logistics, and observance of the COVID-19 health protocols.

### 2.4 Study Population, Sampling, and Sample

The study population consisted of adolescent boys and girls from 13 through 17 years of age (both in and out of school), parents, and key persons (people close to the adolescents such as teachers, social workers, youth patrons or matrons in religious communities, and others). Research assistants selected interview participants using systematic sampling based on a list of target participants per category in each village.

In each sampled village, researchers targeted at least 4 interviews with 2 adolescents of each gender (combining those in primary, secondary, vocational training centre, and out of school); 4 interviews with 2 parents of the sampled adolescents and 2 of non-sampled adolescents (while combining fathers and mothers); and 4 interviews with key persons (teachers, social workers, and others who consistently work with adolescents, from both genders). This resulted in a target of 24 participants per district for the one-on-one interviews. The sample totalled around 120 participants for the interviews. Given the prevailing challenges, however, the study



reached a total of 132 participants in the interviews. The foregoing information is summarized in Table 2 below.

*Table 2: Number of Participants Interviewed per Category and Site*

District	Adolescents		Key persons		Parents		Total		
	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Overall
Ilala	02	06	04	04	01	07	07	17	24
Mvomero	03	05	04	04	03	05	10	14	24
Ngorogoro	04	04	04	04	04	04	12	12	24
North-A	04	04	06	02	05	03	15	09	24
Uyui	07	05	06	06	06	06	19	17	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>132</b>

Notably, out of 132 participants for the one-on-one interviews, only 68 (31 men and 37 women) were interviewed on *collaboration*.

In addition to the interviews, 21 focus group discussions (FGDs)—(10 FGDs for adolescents and 11 FGDs for parents)—were conducted. For the FGDs, 3 participants (adolescents or parents) were selected to join the other 4 who participated in the interviews. Ultimately, FGDs in each village consisted of 5 to 7 participants.

## 2.5 Data Collection Methods and Tools

- **Interviews:** One-on-one interviews with adolescents, parents, and key persons were conducted to determine their understanding of *collaboration* skills in Tanzania’s context. Researchers used an interview guide that was developed prior to data collection.
- **Focus Group Discussion (FGD):** Discussions with adolescents and parents were conducted in order to cultivate a deeper understanding of the issues that emerged from the interviews. Researchers developed and used specific FGD guides for each site and its interviews.

## 2.6 Training of Research Teams and Fieldwork

In each district, there was need for an experienced qualitative researcher to take the lead in interviewing and for a research assistant to provide support in terms of logistics, recording, and note-taking. At least one of the researchers needed to be fluent in the language of the study location. To ensure the collection of quality data, a 2-day researcher-training session (covering 4 hours per day) was conducted via Zoom on October 19 and 21, 2020. The training emphasised the background and objectives of the ALiVE project, the research approach and

methodology, data collection methods and tools, recording and note-taking techniques, ethical issues, and more.

Before going into the field, the research assistants were provided with resources to finalize preparatory work that included notifying local authorities, listing, and sampling, and notifying the sampled participants. Data collection was conducted between November 2 and 6, 2020 in the 5 districts. The exercise lasted two days in each village. The first day was spent on the in-depth interviews, while the second day was reserved for the FGDs, which were conducted at a safe and central location within the village. Interviews and FGDs were audio-recorded and hand-written for backup and to ensure accuracy during translation or transcription.

## 2.7 Coding System and Data Analysis

A coding system was established to analyse the 68 interviews on *collaboration* following the method of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

The analysis was centrally conducted for all the interviews and FGDs from the three countries. For the analysis of the interviews, we established a coding system based on *contextual (descriptive) variables*, including (a) category of informants, (b) sex of the participants, (c) country, and (d) district. In *quantitative* terms, the contextual variables were analysed descriptively (in terms of frequency and percentage) using Microsoft Excel and Dedoose.

The coding system also considered *content variables* related to (e) definition and process described by the participants, (f) subskills, (g) dispositions and values, (h) behaviours, (i) related skills, (j) support systems and factors for enhancing *collaboration* skills, and (k) methods to assess the skill in adolescents. In *qualitative* terms as recommended by Gibbs (2018) and using the Dedoose program (version 8.3.41.), we performed an analysis of the subjects’ understanding of *collaboration* as presented in the interviews, paying specific attention to elements of contextualisation in contrast with what has been found in the literature review.

These predetermined categories emerged from the analysis of five interviews (at least 1 from each category) conducted by nine research assistants to achieve an inter-rater reliability in the coding system. Apart from these predetermined categories, others emerged from the main topic of *collaboration*; this report thus addresses the local perspective of the skill structure. The analysis process involved the identification of patterns of similar ideas, concepts, or topics to establish the connection and integration of information with the theoretical foundation (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as well as a suggested indication or evidence for contextualisation. The

codes were created following the criteria for qualitative evaluation: dependency, transferability, credibility, and verifiability (Duffy, 1987).

Furthermore, the *synthetic analysis* followed the three stages pointed out by Thomas and Harden (2008): the free “line-by-line” coding of the primary interviews, including sentences or paragraphs as the analysis unit, the organization of these “free codes” into related areas to construct “descriptive themes,” and the development of “analytical themes” (p. 4). The analytical themes go beyond the findings of the primary interviews and develop additional concepts, understandings, or hypotheses. The analytical themes are put in relation to the recommendations for assessment, intervention, and policymaking to contextualise *collaboration* skills in East Africa.

Additionally, the researchers used the *triangulation* technique (Flick, 1992, 2004) to search, identify, select, evaluate, and summarise data from interviews, based on pre-defined criteria and emergent categories.

Finally, *data reduction* was applied through a mixed-method analysis: (a) the initial subgroup classification of the interviews is based on each participant’s category (adolescents, parents, and key persons), sex, and district; and (b) data reduction involves techniques of extracting and coding data. These mixed-method analyses were carried out using the Dedoose program, which allows for the analysis of the frequency of the codes in terms of the demographic information of the participants and allows for the integration of qualitative and quantitative data. In this regard, three types of descriptive analysis were conducted: code co-occurrence, cross-tabulation of the code and participants’ characteristics, and cross-tabulation of the code and 2 or more participants’ characteristics.

Notably, for each of the quotations in the findings, we have included a code that helps in identifying the category of the participant. In each code, the first letter represents the country (Tanzania), the second letter represents the category of participants (e.g., ‘A’ for adolescent, ‘P’ for parent, and ‘K’ for key person) and the number represents the number assigned to the participant.

## 2.8 Ethical Considerations

The research team upheld approaches that address ethical considerations in dealing with different categories of participants. These include obtaining informed consent, ensuring the confidentiality of information obtained from the participants, compensating the participants (both monetarily and non-monetarily), and ensuring voluntary participation. Precautions were taken to adhere to the COVID-19 guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health at that time,

especially those of not exceeding 15 persons for every gathering, wearing masks, physical distancing, and the washing and sanitizing of hands.

### 3 FINDINGS

#### 3.1 General Characteristics of the Participants

Overall, 68 participants (31 men and 37 women) were interviewed on collaboration skills. Twenty-two of these were adolescents (7 boys and 15 girls), 23 were parents (12 men and 11 women), and 23 were key persons (12 men and 11 women). Furthermore, the average ages (in years) of the participants were 15.4 for adolescents (15.1 for boys and 15.5 for girls; SD=1.6), 45.4 for parents (51.5 for men and 39.4 for women; SD=13.1), and 33.6 for key persons (32.1 for men and 35.2 for women; SD=5.6).

#### 3.2 Codes and Central Themes in Collaboration

##### 3.2.1 Definition

The first group of questions posed to participants concerns the definition of *collaboration*. Participants answered the question in a personal and often unscientific way, but this allowed them to adequately identify a contextualized definition of *collaboration*. This definition often depicted their personal experience of community and daily events.

As presented in the previous sections, 68 participants including parents, adolescents, and key persons defined *collaboration* based on their understanding of the concept and personal experiences or by offering examples of people they believe showed good collaboration skills.

The analysis reports ways in which participants defined collaboration as both an *abstract* term and as a concrete reality in their experiences. Some codes play a central role in the definition and indicate common characteristics of the understanding of the skill by the participants.

Within this category (definition), some codes stand out from the many excerpts. These codes are *working together*, *helping the community*, and *unity*. Then there are codes that, despite having a smaller number of corresponding excerpts, have an important meaning because they relate to the thematic area of values.

In some cases, participants' answers are complete definitions like, "cooperation is an act that leads work or activity whereby people can exchange ideas at the same time, or say collaboration [is] the act of being able to work or do something with others/together" (T-K-44).<sup>1</sup> In other cases, however, they are concrete descriptions of the interactions typical of the collaborative process: "Cooperation is when parents decide a meeting that, [let's] meet on a

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<sup>1</sup> The first letter represents the country (Tanzania), the second letter represents the category of participants (e.g., 'A' for adolescent, 'P' for parent, and 'K' for key person), and the number represents the number assigned to the participant.

certain day to solve the problems of our children' that is cooperation, yeah working together" (T-P-41).

In cases like this, the participant has offered an effective collaborative experience that helps one understand the local perception of this competence, even though the response is not a formal definition.

*Table 3: Categories and Codes That Emerged as the Definition of Collaboration*

<b>CATEGORY: DEFINITION</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS (SOURCES)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>EXCERPTS</b>	<b>%</b>
Working/Staying together	48	70.59	57	63.33
Helping the community	22	32.35	30	33.33
Unity	21	30.88	26	28.88
Teamwork/Cooperation	27	39.71	35	38.89
Relationship skills	6	8.82	8	8.89
Agreement	5	7.35	7	7.78
Sharing	5	7.35	6	6.67
Love	5	7.35	7	7.78
Family	4	5.88	6	6.67
Goal setting	2	2.94	3	3.33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68<sup>2</sup></b>		<b>90<sup>3</sup></b>	

An overview of the frequency of excerpts that include the main codes in defining collaboration are presented by gender and category in Figure 1 and by district in Figure 2.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the total number of participants who were interviewed on collaboration. It is not the sum of the observed frequencies, as more than one code in the theme could emerge from the same participant.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the total number of excerpts that emerged in the definition of collaboration. It is not the sum of observed frequencies, as one excerpt could contain more than one of these codes.

Figure 1: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Working Together, Unity, Teamwork, Helping the Community, and Relationship Skills, by Gender and Category

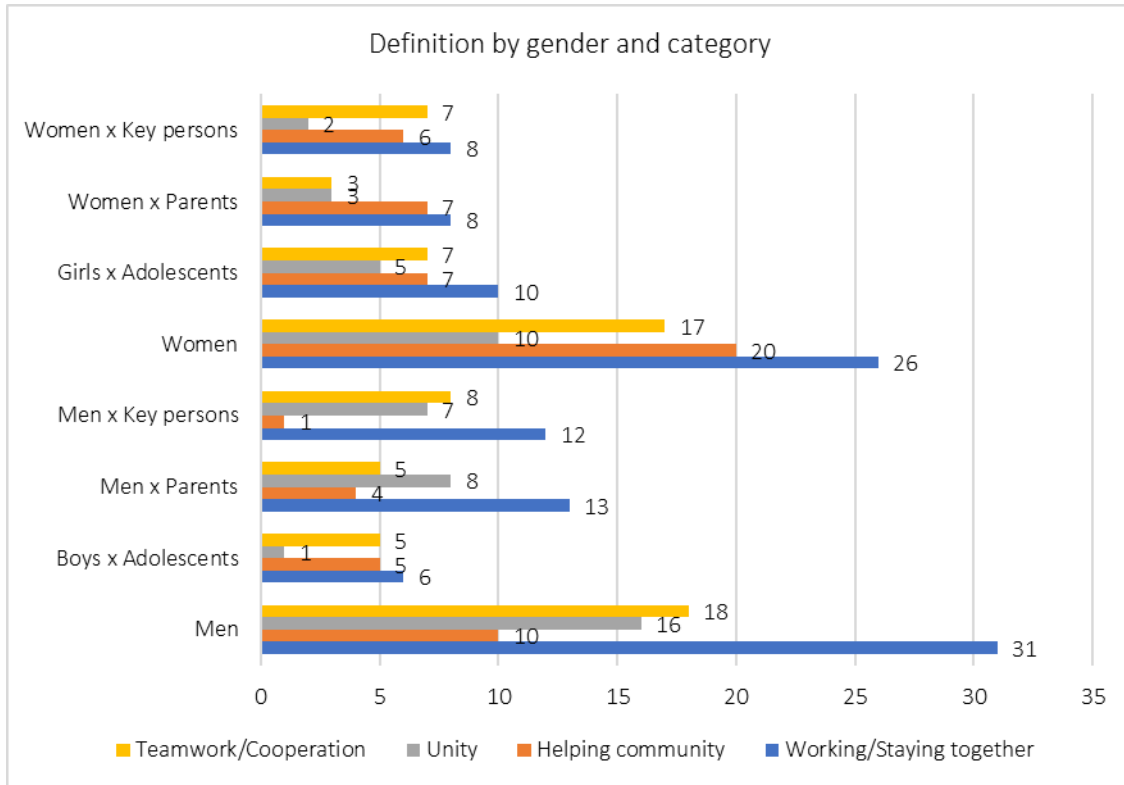
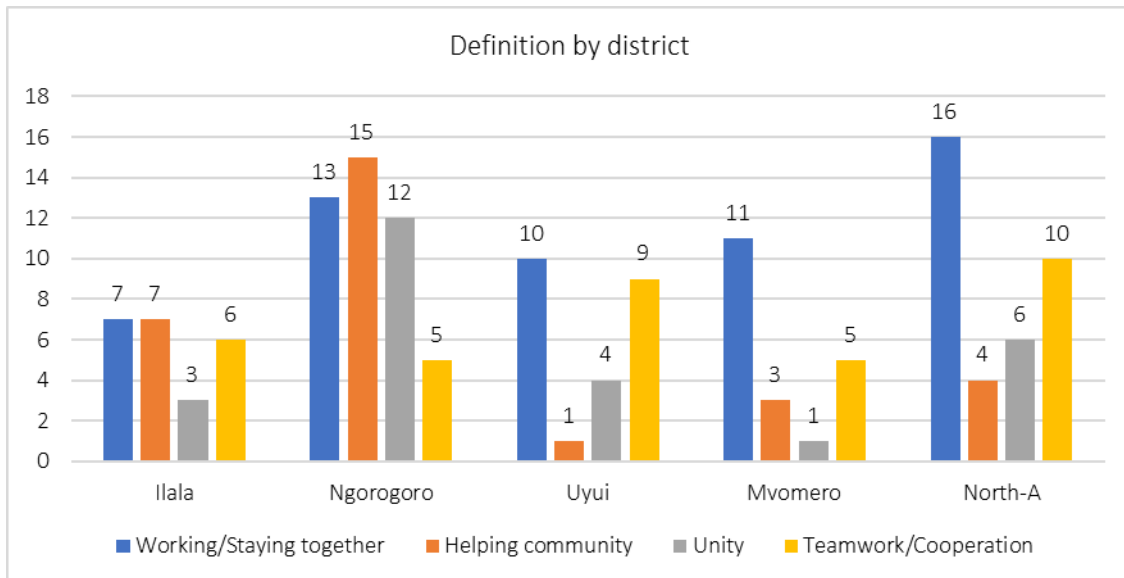


Figure 2: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Working Together, Unity, Teamwork, Helping the Community, and Relationship Skills, by District



The majority of participants (70.6%) identify collaboration as the act of “working together.” Sometimes the participants expressed this in a general way (T-P-33, T-P-23, T-K-42, T-K-41); other times they added details that emphasise certain aspects, such as the fact of working together in a free manner, like volunteering: “[Collaboration] is a volunteering action which needs a person to work with another person, together. But it is volunteering, not being forced, thus why I said it’s a volunteering action, so in short collaboration is like that” (T-K-14).

Another code that stands out in several excerpts is helping the community (30% of excerpts matched the definition). Interestingly, the very characteristic of helping emerges when one provides a definition. In fact, even according to the etymology of collaboration, the purpose of this skill is to do work. In the contextualized understanding, however, it becomes clear that it is not so much work that triggers collaboration, but someone’s need. It is the need that triggers the helping process, which is identified here as collaboration:

If I am there, something has happened in the community, for example, a neighbour’s child has done well but has failed to go to college and a message passes saying let’s contribute for him to go to college. I have to be responsible for contributing to him as others. Contribute for him to go to study or maybe there is a patient and I can help him go to the hospital with transport or give him money. I help him. So, I collaborated with my colleagues. (T-A-34)

There are many characteristics of helping the community; collaboration is “advising each other” (T-K-05) or coming together to support a person who has a problem (T-P-14).

To confirm this, the dimension of help offered to those in need plays an important role in collaboration. In addition to being associated with the definition of collaboration, the code *helping the community* was mentioned by 58 participants and appears in 130 excerpts.

The occurrence of the code *unity*, in addition to corresponding to a significant number of excerpts, has a particular meaning. In some cases, unity emerges as a value, as a necessary factor for collaboration that is defined as “doing things in unity” (T-K-39), as “[solving] problems in unity” (T-A-38) or as the “situation of working with unity” (T-K-19); but in 17 cases (T-P-23, T-P-25, T-K-40, T-K-39, T-K-38, T-K-19, T-K-08, T-K-12, T-K-01, T-P-11, T-P-08, T-P-07, T-P-44, T-P-14, T-A-28, T-A-06, T-A-07) when participants were asked for a synonym of collaboration, the answer they gave was *unity*.

*Teamwork* was identified by 27 participants who associate it with collaboration. This association is understandable and relevant. Other codes have a low number of occurrences but highlight important aspects, such as agreement, sharing, and love as dimensions that some participants report as constitutive of collaboration. Some emphasize that to collaborate it is necessary to agree, because if there is no agreement, there is no collaboration:

“Cooperation is about two things to form one thing in common, but cooperation will depend on the agreement we made, we must agree with each other so that to avoid confusion between me and you” (T-P-42).

*Sharing*, as cited by some participants (T-K-32, T-K-43, T-K-44, T-A-30, T-A-13), covers both the area of sharing material things with someone in need and the sphere of confident confrontation between peers. It is not necessarily aimed at solving problems but is a form of help and support between peers as a way of life, being in a group, and sharing.

*Love* always takes on unique features when associated with the definition of collaboration. It is evident that collaboration is always conceived on a personal level and lacks an extrinsic purpose. Collaboration is when one loves others and works together (T-A-12), or in one case, *love* is given as a synonym of collaboration (T-P-35). In another excerpt, the interviewee says that when we talk about collaboration, we are talking about love and care (T-A-44).

Collaboration is perceived as “having good relationships” (T-A-33). However, collaboration is also understood as something that happens in a network of people where there are relationships.

The family is the first environment in which one collaborates, because family is the first point of community belonging. One parent defines cooperation as “people being together, as well as being with family” (T-P-08). Understanding the family as the first place where collaboration takes place is a relevant starting point in terms of understanding what collaboration is.

To conclude, it is important to highlight that only two excerpts mention goal setting: a central aspect in the Western conception of collaboration, defined as “working together to achieve a common goal.” The contextualized definition of collaboration highlighted the personal involvement of the participants rather than the achievement of an extrinsic goal.



Figure 3: Percentage of the Codes Used to Define Collaboration, by Gender

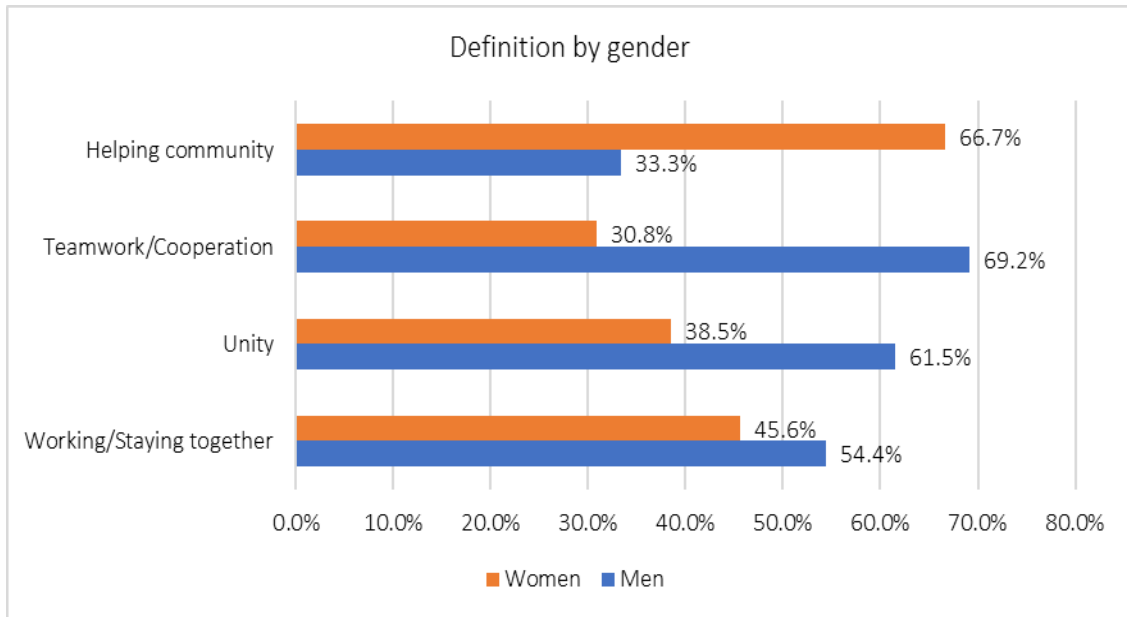
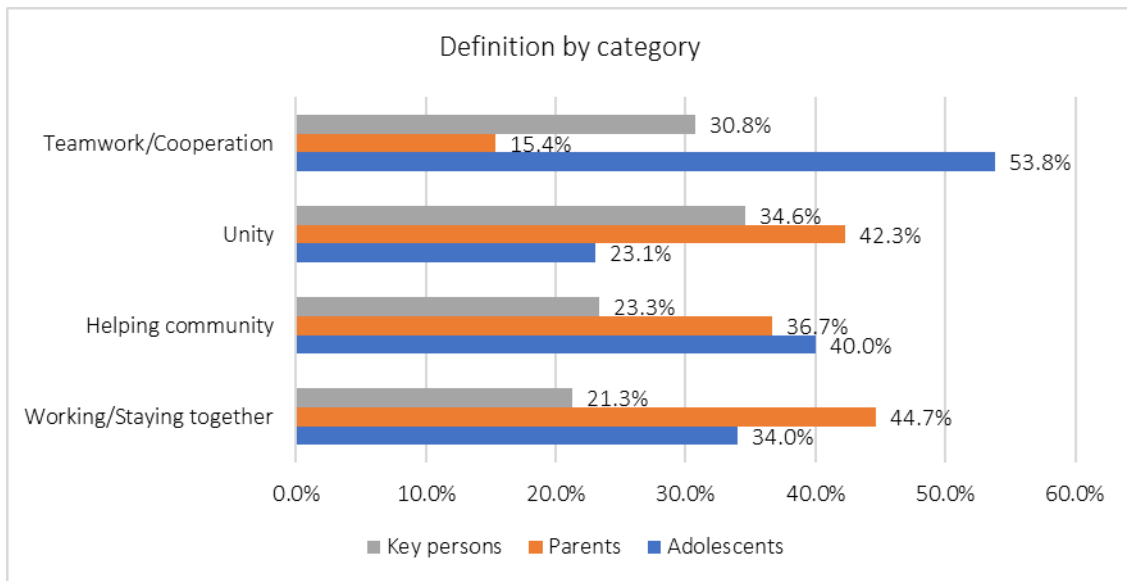


Figure 4: Percentage of the Codes Used to Define Collaboration, by Category



### 3.2.2 Subskills

Collaboration is a skill that involves group dynamics, so there are many other skills related to it.

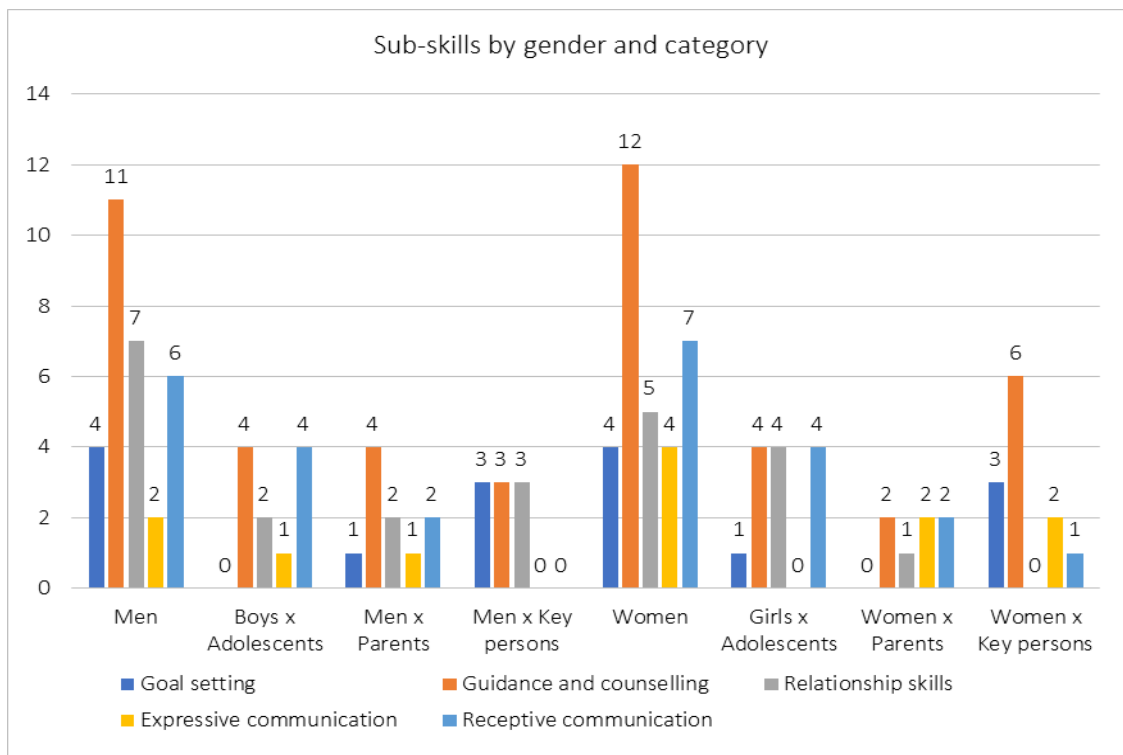
From the interviews, some skills emerged as fundamental for collaboration. Most of the skills identified are relationship-centred because they concern relationships with others. Moreover, there is limited reference to the skills of self-regulation.

Table 4: Categories and Codes That Emerged as Subskills of Collaboration

CATEGORY: SUBSKILLS	PARTICIPANTS (SOURCES)	%	EXCERPTS	%
Goal setting	7	10.29	8	13.33
Guidance and counselling	19	27.94	23	38.33
Relationship skills	12	17.65	12	20.00
Expressive communication	6	8.82	6	10.00
Receptive communication	9	13.24	13	21.66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>60</b>	

Figures 5 and 6 present an overview of the frequency of collaboration subskills by gender and category. Overall, guidance and counselling and receptive communication are mentioned as the most relevant subskills of collaboration both by women and men, as well as key persons.

Figure 5: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Subskills of Collaboration, by Gender and Category



When we analyse the data by district, it is paramount to note the clear prevalence of *guidance and counselling* in all the districts involved. Very few excerpts on *goal setting* were found.

Figure 6: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Subskills of Collaboration by District

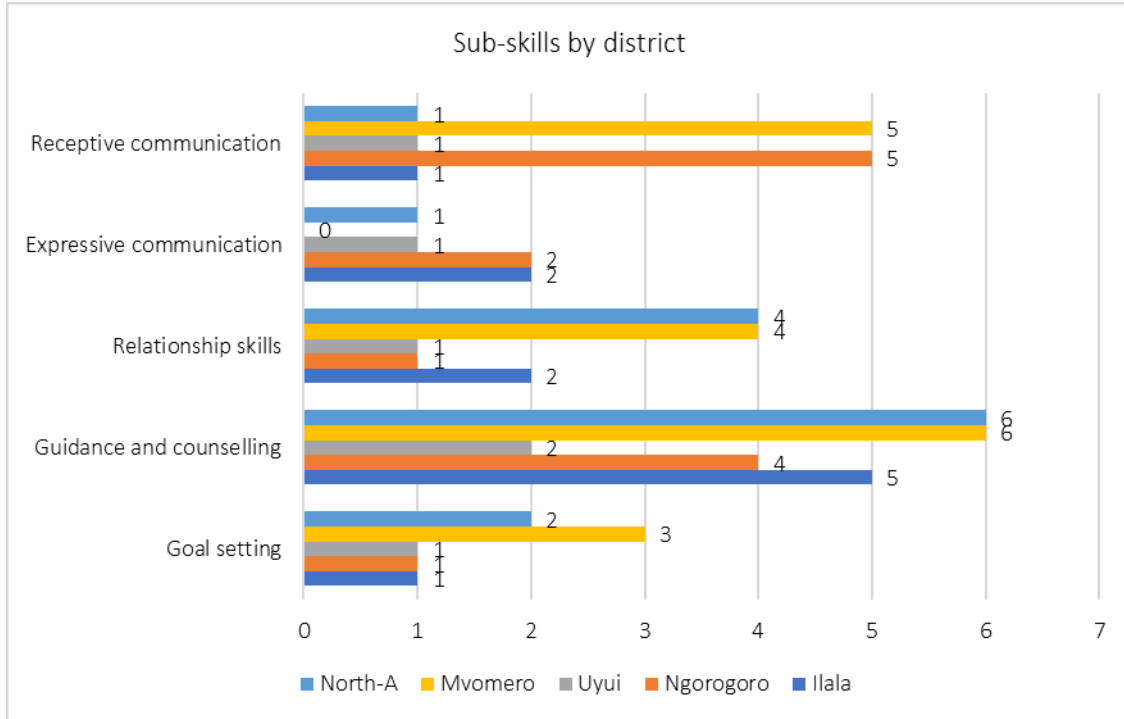
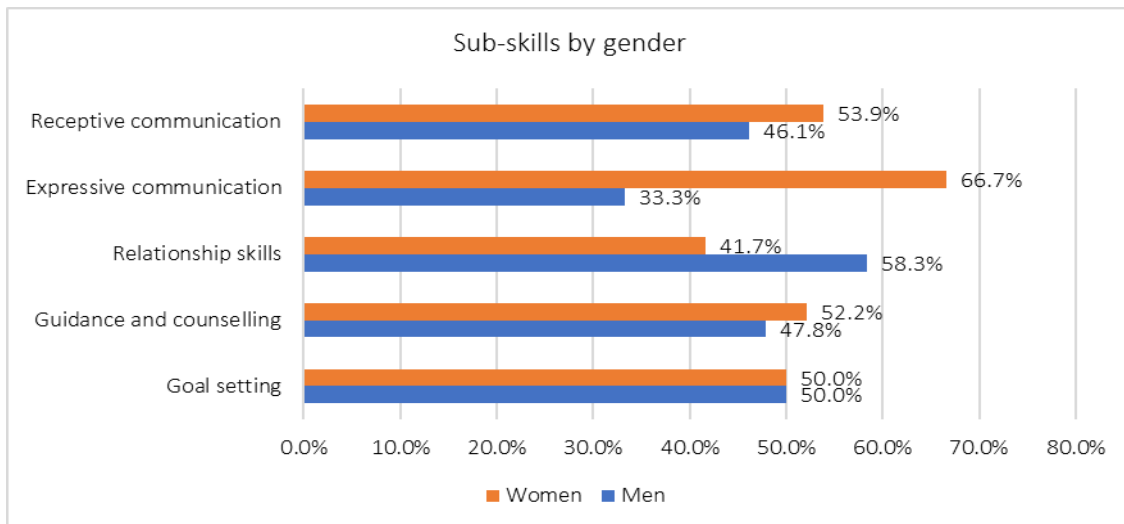


Figure 7: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Subskills of Collaboration by Gender



Only 10.44% of the participants identified goal setting as a necessary skill for collaboration. This confirms what was previously mentioned about the fact that collaboration is triggered by the needs of the community rather than by an extrinsic goal. There are few cases (T-K-29, T-P-42) in which participants clearly identify goal setting as a skill young people need to be collaborative. *Why do you think this young person has collaboration skills? How do you know this young person is collaborating? Give examples of things that a young person does that show that he has collaboration skills.*

The reference of the participants in the subskill *giving or receiving* advice is consistent (28.4%). There are some examples among the participants in which the fact of receiving and giving advice is linked to the typical sharing of community life (T-P-33, T-K-36). One part of sharing resources and needs is contributing to the needs of others by offering your experience. Below is a concrete example that demonstrates the dynamics of requesting help and offering collaboration and advice:

This young person gives collaboration because he asks for help when he gets stuck, [and he] asks for advice and engages people in something that bothers him. A major indicator is to involve others in the matters that bother him. (T-K-33)

The excerpts regarding relationship skills and communication cover most of the quotations relating to subskills. The subskill *relationship skills* recurs in interviews. They are understood as “the ability to be with others” (T-P37) but also as the ability to connect with others (T-K-30), which highlights the element of empathy. Finally, the quality of a good collaborator is pointed out as one who can have good relationships with the people around him or her (T-A-33).

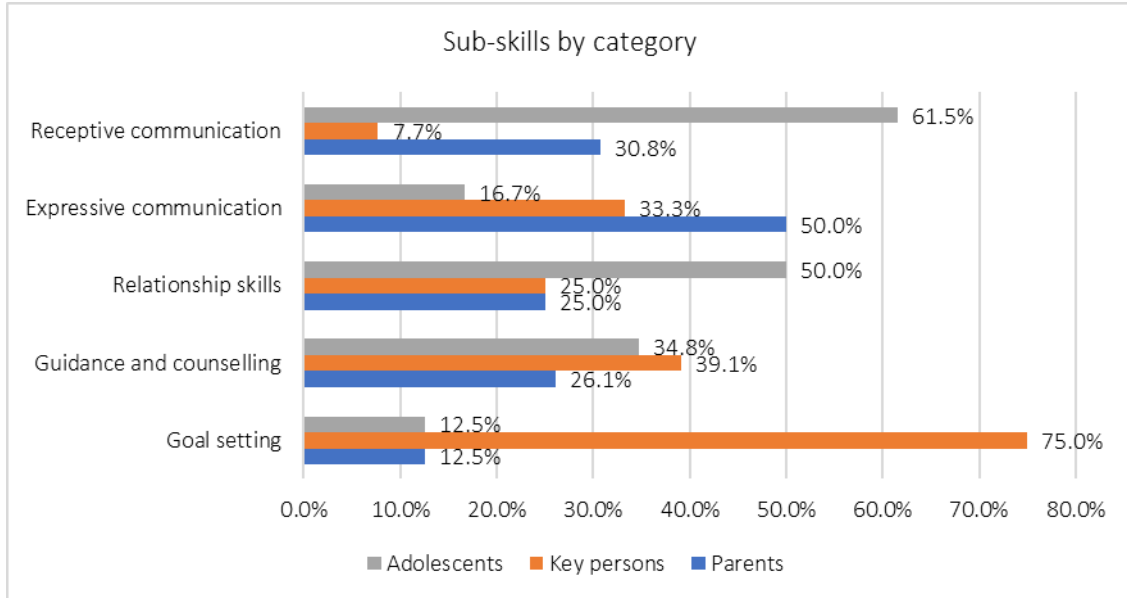
Collaborating is, in a certain sense, having the ability to communicate. A participant belonging to the category of key persons offers an example that sheds light on the relationship between collaboration and communication. He argues that to help a child collaborate, one must first talk to him. If people “live” a communicative relationship, the first thing they will do when they experience a need will be precisely to communicate it to receive help, thereby triggering the collaborative process.

You talk to him/her because others are having some problems, so the first strategy is to talk to him/her, you can talk to him/her because others may not be aware of the importance of collaboration So, the first thing is to talk to him/her so that can have self-awareness. That means the first strategy is to talk to the child to make him/her know the meaning of collaboration. The most important thing to the youth of that age is to talk to them because if you use other strategies to force or punish it will not work. (T-K-13)

Not only active communication but also receptive listening is important for being a good collaborator. This aspect covers a wide area that ranges from being a “good listener” and

being attentive (T-A-31) to having a good “ability to learn” (T-A-14) and paying attention to advice (T-P-07).

Figure 8: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Subskills of Collaboration by Category



### 3.2.3 Dispositions

Dispositions are features of a person’s character that help improve and nurture the way they exercise a skill such as collaboration. The process of learning and exercising the skill of collaboration can be supported and facilitated by the presence of dispositions such as *hard work*, *leadership*, *positive attitude*, and *willingness to be corrected or advised* (see extracts or details of the participants in the table below).

Table 5: Codes That Emerged as Dispositions of Collaboration

CATEGORY: DISPOSITIONS	PARTICIPANTS (SOURCES)	%	EXCERPTS	%
Hard work	13	19.12	17	26.15
Leadership	18	26.47	20	44.44
Positive attitude	6	8.82	7	15.55
Willingness to be corrected or advised	5	7.35	5	11.11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>45</b>	

Figure 3: Number of Excerpts That Include Dispositions of Collaboration by Gender and Category

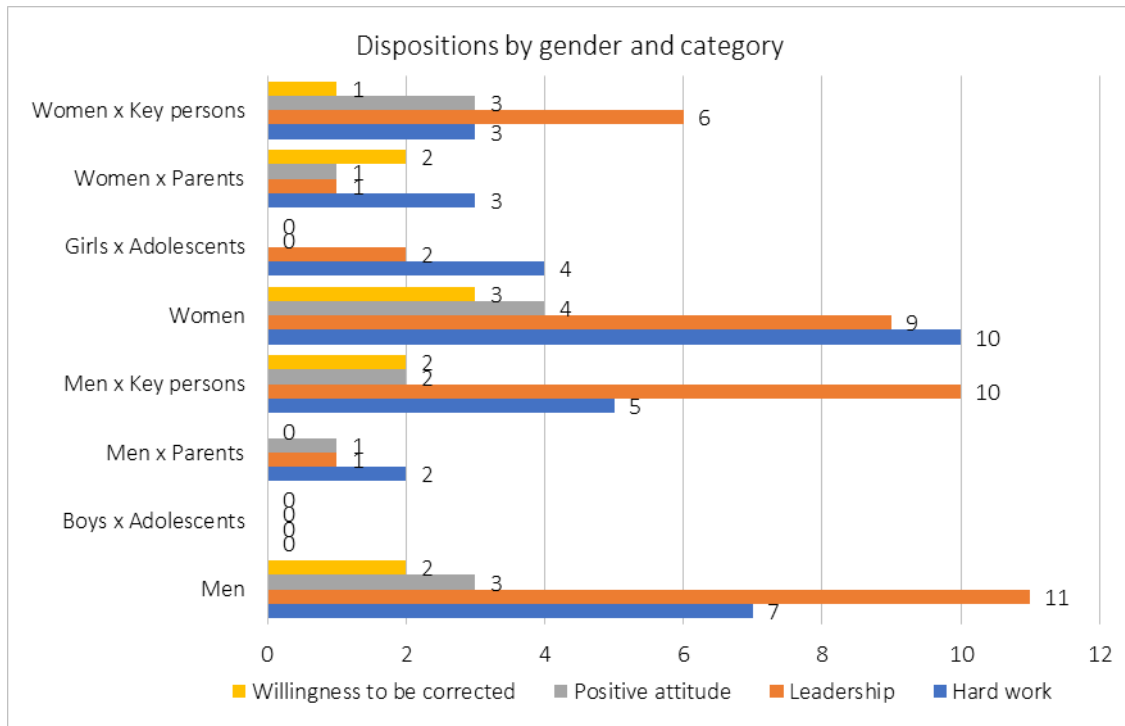
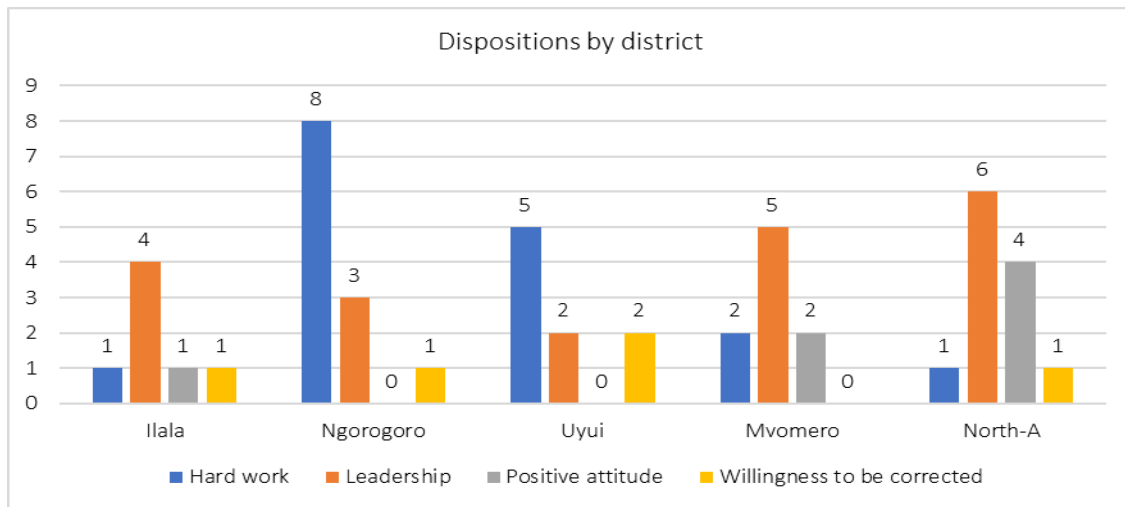


Figure 4: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Dispositions of Collaboration by District



Being a hardworking person is one characteristic of a good collaborator, according to participants belonging to all categories (4 parents, 7 key persons, 2 adolescents). It is interesting to note that being hardworking means having an active presence in various

spheres, from studying to domestic help to supporting community needs. To exemplify the attitude of a collaborative teenager, one parent says:

She always used to help her mother with domestic activities and also doing business, emphasizing her young brothers and sisters to work hard instead of depending and hence her positive opinion, make a timetable for others to work for home activities and often use to play with them frequently. [Then she] collaborate with her mother in business to afford their basic needs. (T-P-12)

Furthermore, being hardworking often has a connotation linked to moral conduct (T-A-15, T-A-12, T-P-14, T-P-1, T-P-08, T-K-08, T-A-12). It is explained as being “dedicated to work” (T-A-15) and is also linked to the values of respect for adults (T-P-14), as well as discipline and obedience (T-P-08).

Leadership is the most relevant disposition in terms of the number of occurrences. It is interesting to note that of the eighteen participants who mentioned it, fourteen are key persons. This is probably because this skill emerges most clearly in the classroom. Some participants also pointed to adolescents who can coordinate, contribute, and share with peers in the learning process as clear examples of collaborative leadership.

Because when he is given a job in the classroom he works with others if he does not know he asks, just as when they are given a job, they do not rely on their colleagues to work. . . . When you give him a job he does it because he also participates well in the work. In the classroom, he likes to guide his classmates in reading, for example, if there is no teacher in the classroom he comes forward and leads the topic . . . and at home, he helps with home activities. (T-K-41)

Leadership is thus understood with various features such as the ability to “mobilize people” (T-K-40) and to “involve others” in community issues (T-K-33).

Having a positive attitude and willingness to accept advice and corrections are dispositions of a good collaborator. These are distinctive features that enhance their relationships with others and mutual help. Having a positive attitude means having a willingness to listen and request help from others: it is understood as being committed to the relationship (T-P-35). One participant belonging to the category of parents defines it by saying that having a positive attitude is a characteristic of a good collaborator who can “involve others in doing things to provide help” (T-P-42).

Willingness to be corrected or advised is well-defined by one parent, who says it is a mindset of seeking help when there are problems to face (T-P-18). Precisely this disposition, linked to the ability to “[ask] for help” (T-K-33), triggers the collaborative process.

Figure 11: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Dispositions of Collaboration by Category

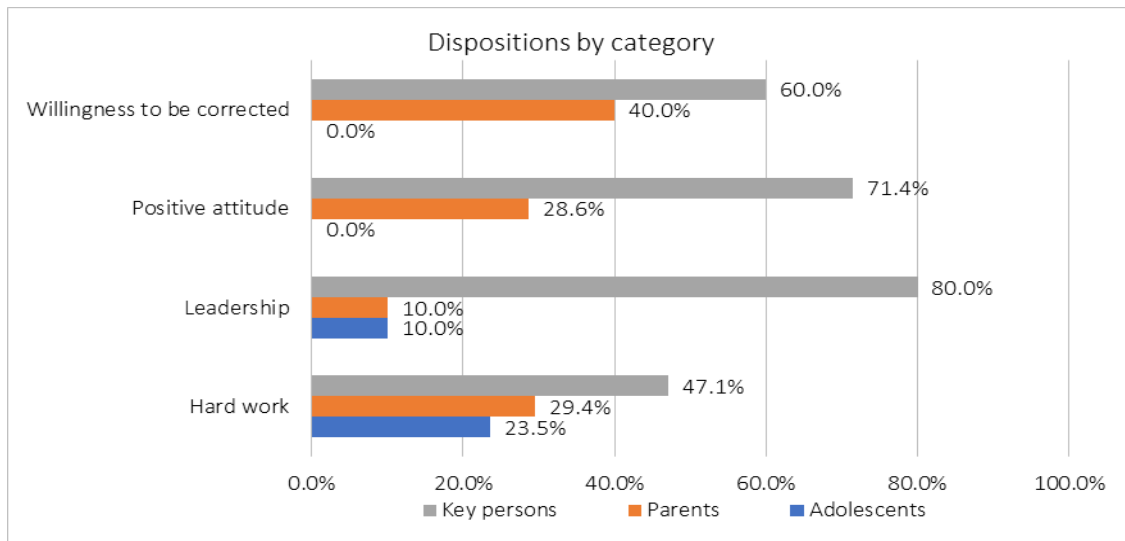
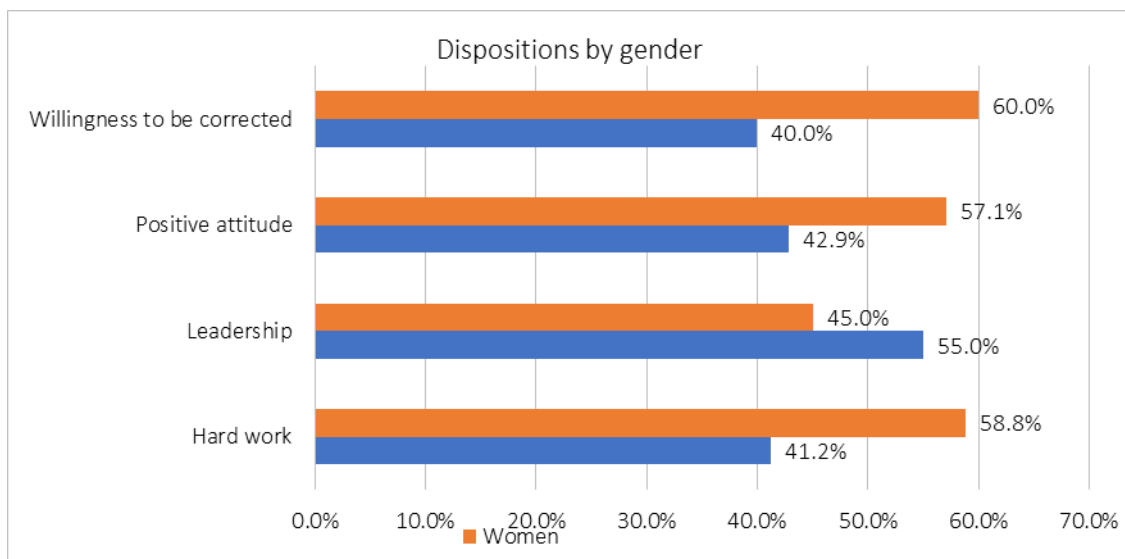


Figure 5: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Dispositions of Collaboration by Gender



### 3.2.4 Values and Behaviours

Participants were asked to describe the behaviour of a teenager with collaborative behaviour. The answers were generally of two types: those describing practical attitudes with examples of collaboration and those mentioning the sphere of values. The latter is strongly underpinned by values of social cohesion. As the table shows, the numerically most relevant occurrence is not the “typical” one, such as being exemplary or obedient, but that of helping the community and more specifically, of close individuals in a situation of need.



*Table 6: Codes That Emerged as Values and Behaviours of Collaboration*

<b>CATEGORY: VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS (SOURCES)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>EXCERPTS</b>	<b>%</b>
Teamwork	6	8.82	7	10.44
Hard work	8	11.76	8	11.94
Discipline	12	17.65	13	19.40
Obedience	17	25.00	21	31.34
Love	7	10.29	7	10.44
Exemplary	4	5.88	5	7.46
Helping the community	22	32.35	24	35.82
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>67</b>	

Figure 13: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Values and Behaviours of Collaboration, by Gender and Category

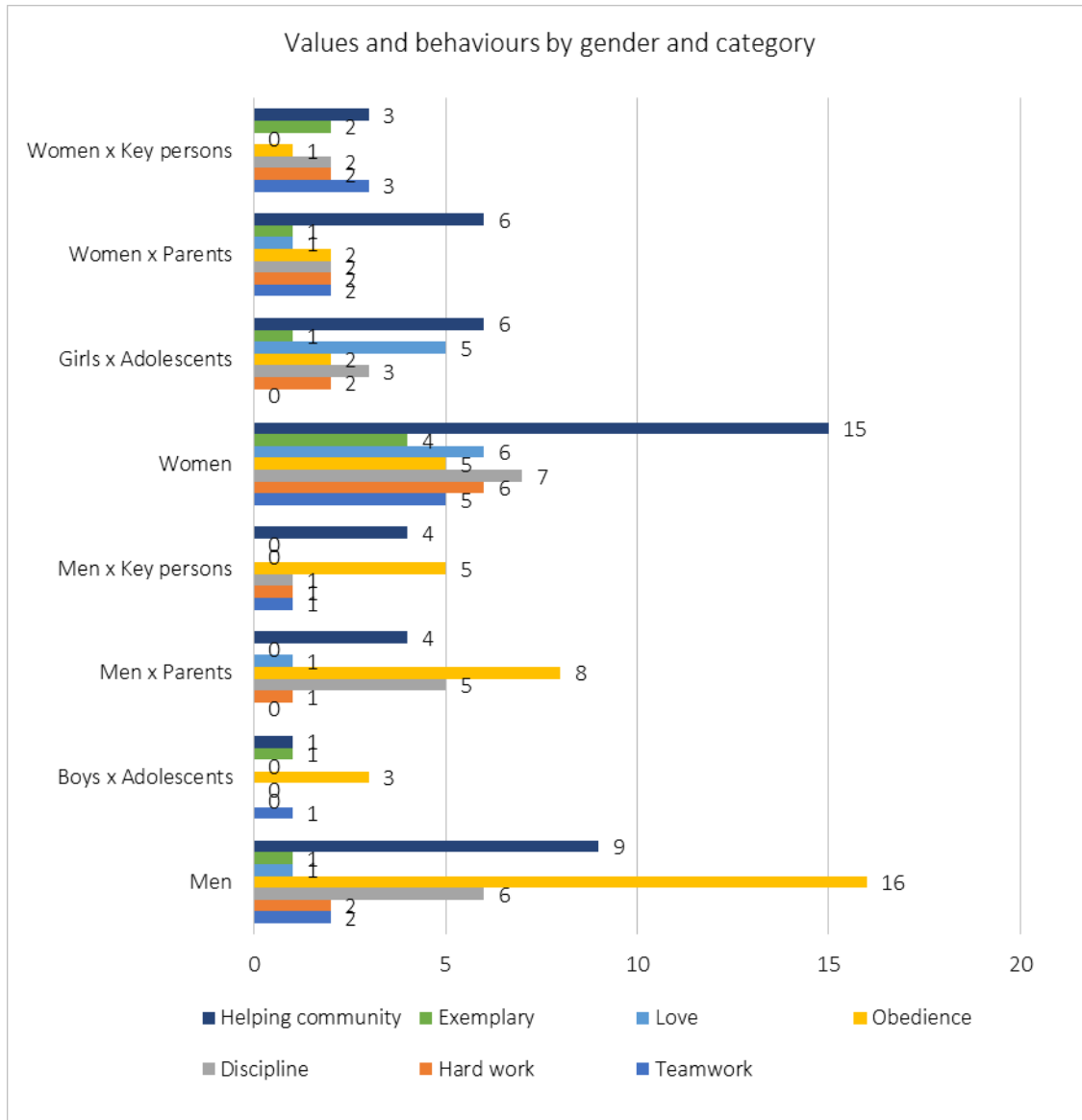
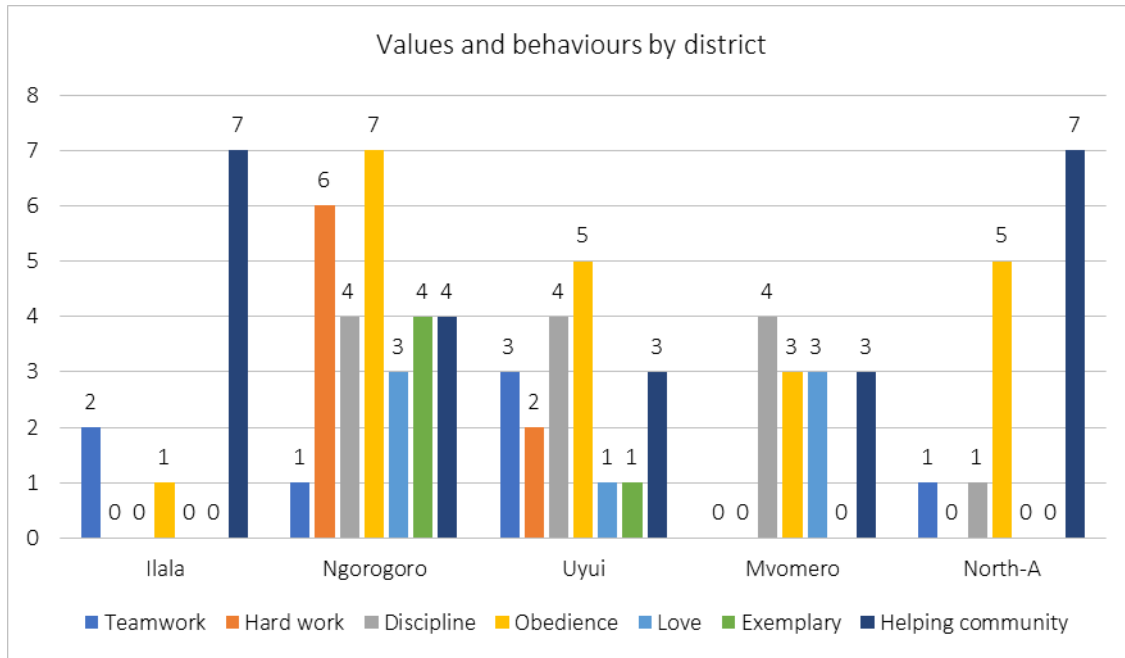


Figure 6: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Values and Behaviours of Collaboration by District



Discipline, being “obedient,” and being exemplary are typical traits of good overall behaviour and appear in descriptions of collaborative behaviour. Obedience is mentioned by 25.4% of the participants. Obedience is a fundamental aspect of collaborative behaviour, and various examples indicate real-world instances of this:

Collaborative children in the community do things exactly as they are directed to do. For example, when you are doing an event and you ask a child to do some chores, then they do without changing, we can now say they are cooperating with us. When there is a funeral . . . because having funerals is a normal thing, then the kids are asked to help in building their fellow’s house (grave), then they go immediately without questions, we can say they are cooperative. (T-P-25)

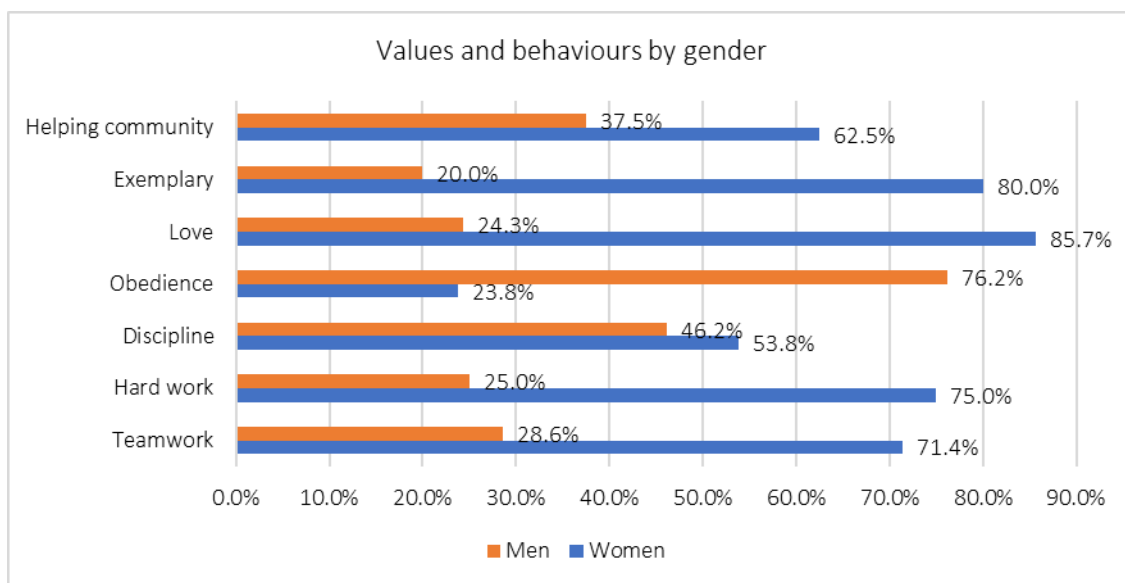
Twelve participants identify discipline as a feature of collaboration. This characteristic is important in a collaborative group because without it, the necessary coordination with the other members of the group/community becomes difficult. Even though discipline is mentioned, it is not always described in detail. In some cases, it corresponds to self-awareness and responsibility (T-P-25, T-K-25, T-A-07) and therefore concerns self-regulation. In other cases, it is limited to compliance with instructions given by an adult (T-P-29, T-K-30, T-P-17).

Hard work and teamwork occur many times. This is because, on a collaborative level, the importance of the work plays a key role. Being hardworking means being committed to working both at home and at school (T-K-14), but also being dedicated (T-A-15) to what one does.

Similarly, the ability to do things together is characteristic of the behaviour of a good collaborator. A key person’s quotation is particularly interesting because it speaks of a partnership within the household, saying that parents must learn to do things in cooperation with their children (T-K-44).

Finally, the code with the most occurrences is *helping the community*. It is interesting to note that although it is not directly relevant to good behaviour, the community aid dimension is the most important in collaboration. The *helping of others* has several features in the interviews. It primarily concerns the dimension of attention to need (TP-25), proximity to people with problems (TK-44), and “[engaging] others to what they are facing” (TK-36).

Figure 7: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Behaviours and Values of Collaboration by Gender



### 3.2.5 Related Skills

The participants often associated collaboration with the other skills analysed in the interviews. It is interesting to see the connections the participants identified among these skills, because in their experience they are not independent of each other but are continuously related.

Table 7: Skills and Values and Their Occurrences with Collaboration

<b>CATEGORY: RELATED SKILLS</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS (SOURCES)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>EXCERPTS</b>	<b>%</b>
Problem solving	9	13.24	9	21.95
Respect	17	25.00	21	51.21
Self-awareness	10	14.71	11	26.82
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>41</b>	

Figure 16: Percentage of the Codes Used as Related Skills and Values of Collaboration by Gender

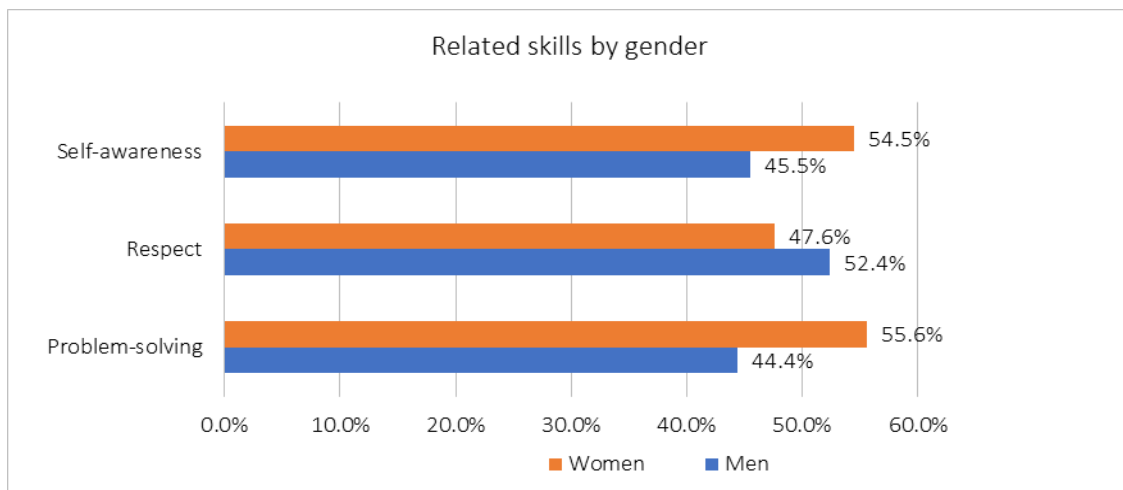


Figure 17: Percentage of the Codes Used as Related Skills and Values of Collaboration by Category

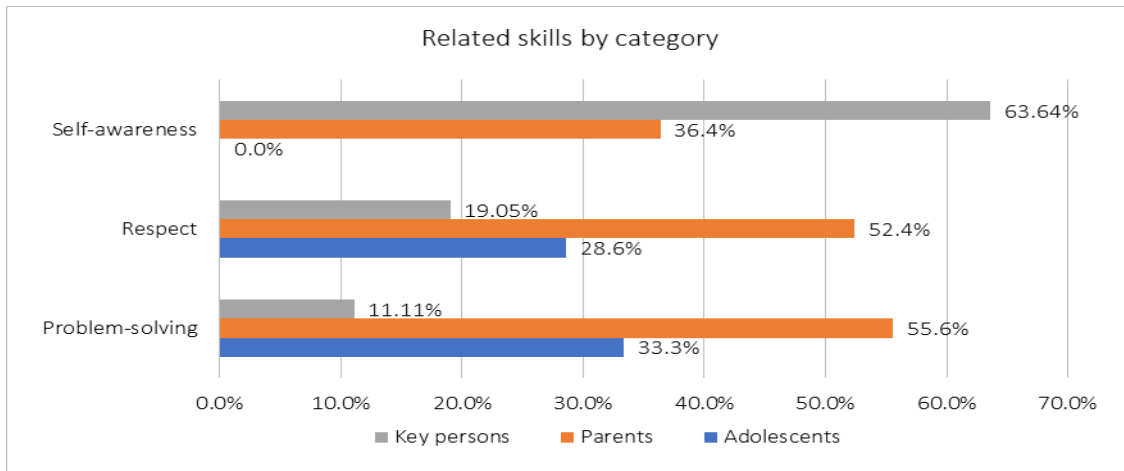
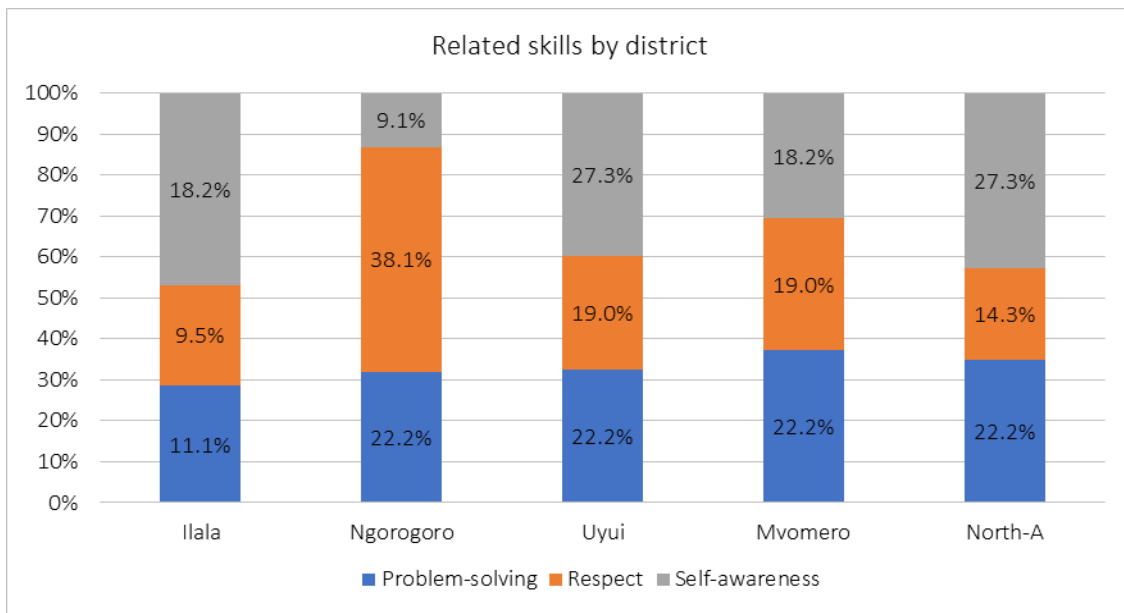


Figure 18: Percentage of the Codes Used as Related Skills and Values of Collaboration by District



Collaboration is often seen as something related to a problem to be solved. As mentioned before, the collaborative process is often triggered by concrete problems and not by an extrinsic purpose. Therefore, the problems are solved within the network of “close” people.

The relationship between problem solving and collaboration is specifically linked to situations of need, to the fact of being “needy” (T-P-07). Collaboration is “asking for help in problem solving in the community” (T-P-23), and on the other hand, it is “offering collaboration in front of a problem” (T-P-36). Similarly, a good collaborator is one who “leads others to collaborate so solve a specific problem” (T-K-39).

The most relevant co-occurrence, in terms of numbers, is that of collaboration with respect. The connection between the two appears many times both implicitly and explicitly in interviews.

Participants understand respect in many different ways. Some highlight the fact that the behaviour of collaborative individuals is primarily being respectful (TP-40), and even more radically, some say that “everything depends on respect” (TA-44). Also, some say respect is an indicator of collaboration (T-P-14). The fundamental aspect of respect that emerges as cross-cutting is that it allows and triggers the collaborative relationship. Indeed, where there is respect there is caring for others (TK-05, TP-12), and that is the key to being empathetic to others’ needs.

Self-awareness also intersects with collaboration at different levels. Some say that “having awareness” (TK-01) is necessary for offering collaboration and that lack of self-awareness leads to a lack of collaboration (TK-13) because if a person is not aware of herself, she cannot be aware of building a relationship with others.

Two other interviewees in the category of parents similarly highlight some very important aspects: first, that self-awareness is an indicator of a collaborative attitude (TP-25); and second, that to collaborate, it is necessary that one “recognize himself” (TP-29), otherwise it is impossible to have a relationship with others.

### 3.2.6 Support Systems and Enabling Factors

Table 8: Codes That Emerged as Support Systems and Enabling Factors for Collaboration

<b>CATEGORY: SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND ENABLING FACTORS</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS (SOURCES)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>EXCERPTS</b>	<b>%</b>
Community or Development partners	30	44.12	35	21.34
Family	47	69.12	63	38.41
Friends	8	11.76	8	4.87
School or Training	50	73.53	77	46.95
Helping community	22	32.35	25	15.24
Sharing	11	16.18	11	6.70
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>164</b>	

Figure 8: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Support Systems and Enabling Factors of Collaboration, by Gender and Category

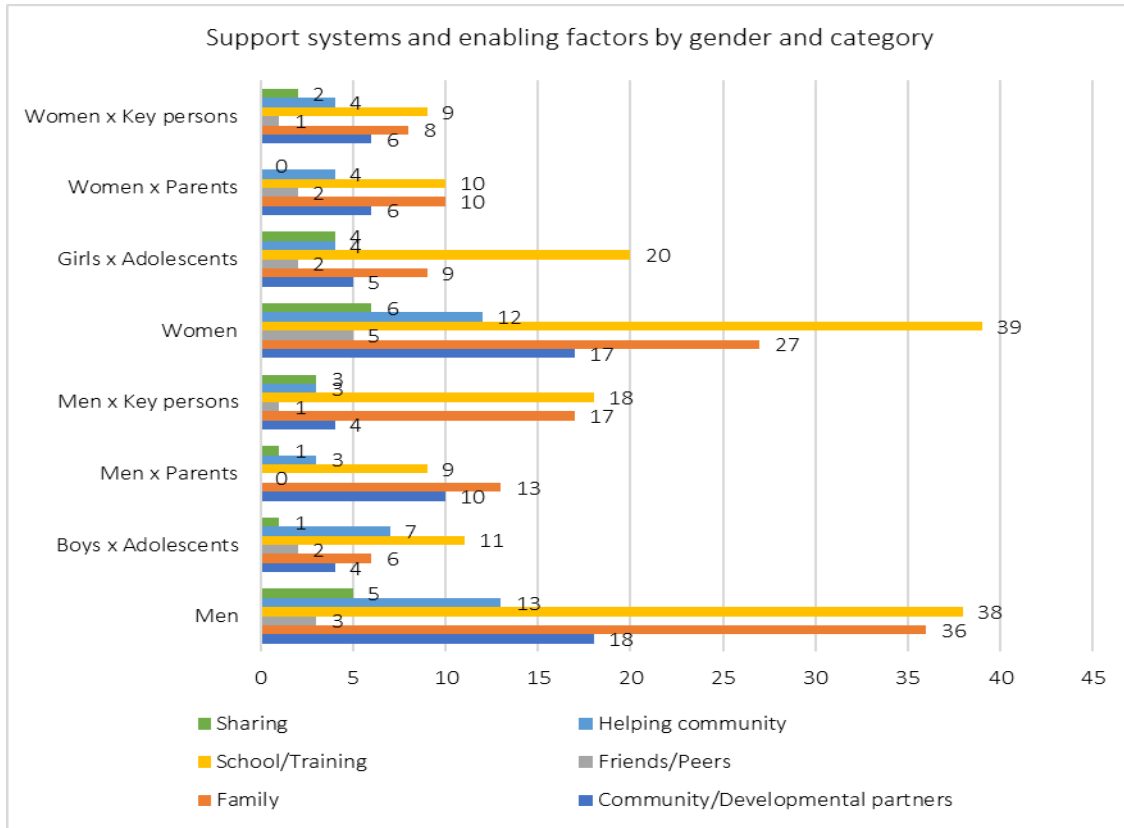


Figure 9: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Support Systems and Enabling Factors of Collaboration, by District

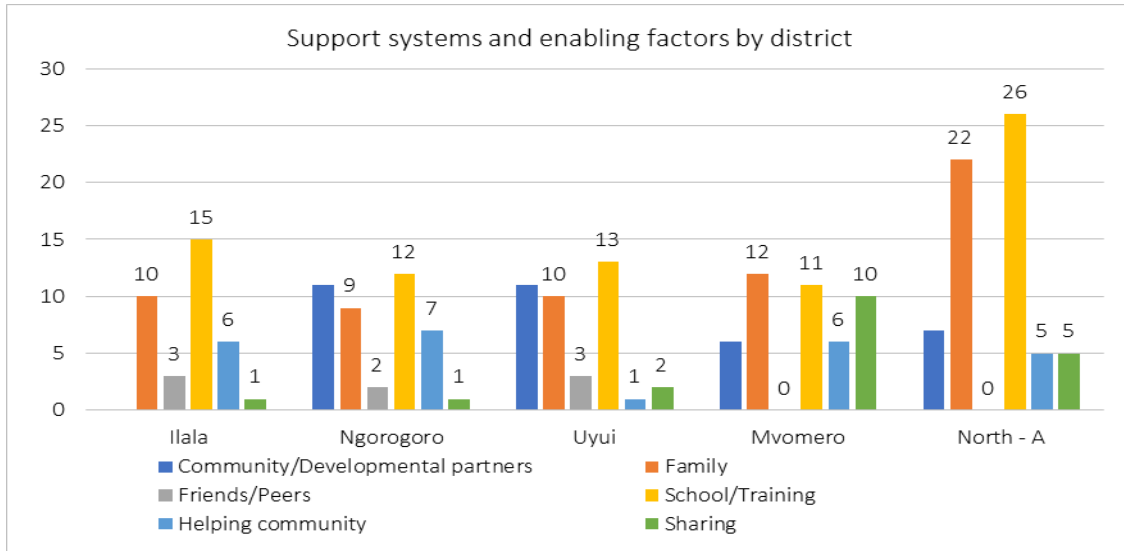




Figure 10: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Codes Identified as Enhancing or Support Systems of Collaboration, by Gender

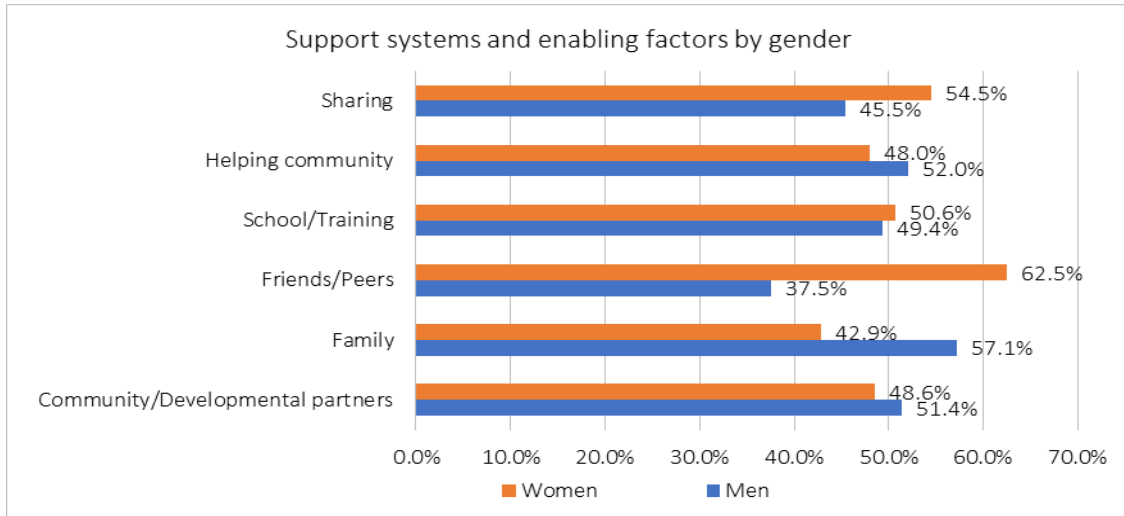
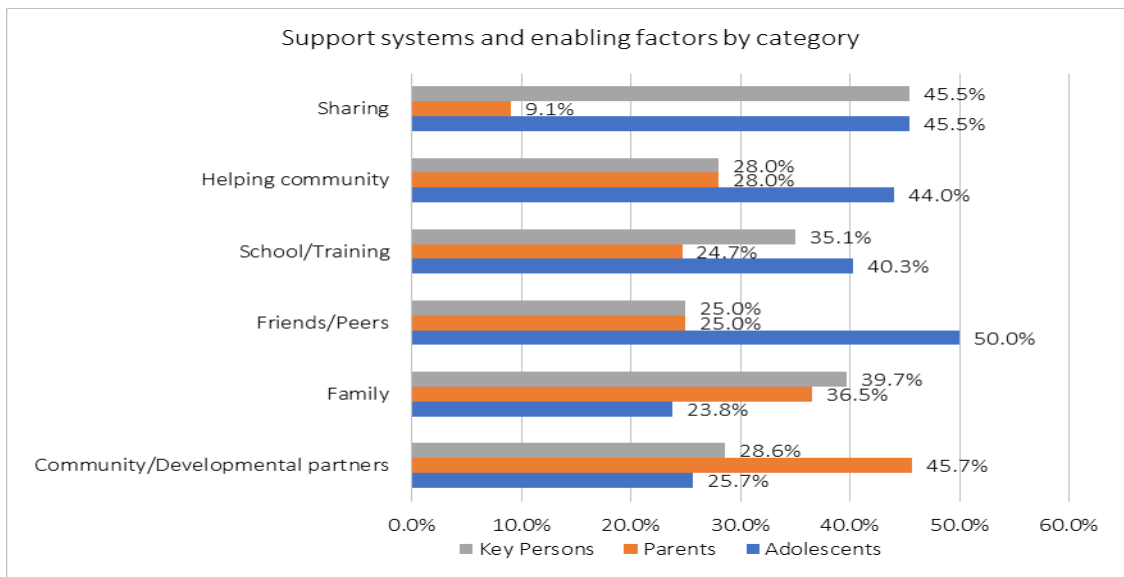


Figure 11: Percentage of Excerpts That Include the Codes Identified as Enhancing/Support Systems of Collaboration, by Category



Support systems are a very important tool for improving the development of collaboration among adolescents. As can be seen from Figure 22, the role of the family (70.1% of participants) and formal education (74.6% of participants) stand out. Family and school play a key role in learning and exercising the skill of collaboration. These two environments find important allies in the community and development partners (44.8% of participants) and in relationships with peers, which are also recognized as positive for the exercise of the

collaborative process (11.9% of participants). A large number of excerpts concern the active “exercise” of collaboration that takes place in sharing (16.4%) and helping community members in a situation of need (32.8%). It is paramount to note how the most practical part of the exercise of collaboration was highlighted by the participants.

Thirty-two excerpts are associated with both the family and the school code. These two environments are understood, at a community level, as being united by a common mission: the well-being of the child. The school is the training environment recognized as the place where collaboration is learned; however, it acts in continuity with the family, and one cannot do without the other. One parent who was asked about what environments enhance cooperation among young people gave this reply:

I would start in families, families should start having cooperation between parents and children, also in schools, cooperation between students in sharing ideas, study tour, though now they have been stopped but they help in building cooperation, football too teachers and students help in building cooperation. (T-P-33)

As emerges from the quotations, the activities that trigger collaboration are very vague, and there are no details about the school or home activities that enhance collaboration. It is interesting to note that parents are aware that the common purpose of school and family is to prepare young people for the challenges they will face in their lives. Key persons shared this opinion (T-K-44, T-K-41, T-K-38, T-K-36, T-K-33, T-K-01, T-K-42, T-K-25), highlighting that what young people learn at school must be supported by what happens at home. In fact, a child who is used to contributing at home will, at school, find it easier to participate in group activities, offer input, and welcome others’ contributions.

A few participants recognize that relationships with peers improve collaboration because it is spontaneously brought into play. Being with peers triggers socialization, which is the first step toward collaborating (T-K-19). Furthermore, collaboration is “learning with other students” (T-A-22) in the school environment, where students help each other and contribute to mutual learning. Friendship is also noted as a collaborative bond because friends help each other in times of need (T-A-14). It is friendship itself that improves collaboration because in a group of friends, it is common for young people to share problems and help each other: “mutual friendship support in various stuff builds cooperation” (T-K-08).

Training and courses offered by local institutions and development organizations are important for allowing young people and adults to collaborate, as they offer useful tools and strategies.

It is important to note that family, community, school, and development partners often appear combined in the participants’ responses. This is connected to the perception that collaboration

is something that happens in networks of people. They in turn communicate with each other through the entire community.

Finally, it is interesting to note the most practical aspect the participants indicated. Although the question was aimed at discovering participants' perceptions of the support systems that enhance collaboration, their responses in various cases focused on the action of sharing (16.4% participants) and helping community members (32.8% participants).

In conclusion, most of the participants highlighted the fundamental role of the family and school by identifying them as the environments in which students are educated and collaborate. Similarly, the relationship with friends and the community also supports and nourishes young people in their evolution toward maturity. Beyond relationships and institutions, however, those interested in enhancing collaboration cannot ignore concrete gestures such as sharing and helping among community members.

The topic of helping is often linked to the value of love (T-A-30, T-A-33, T-A-34, T-P-12, T-P-07, T-A-13). This link of behaviour with help and love highlights a unique feature of the contextualized understanding of this skill. People with collaborative behaviour have the distinct quality of being empathetic to the needs of others, and this interest and care belong to the socio-emotional domain.

### **3.2.7 Assessment Methods**

Among the last categories that emerged from the interviews is one about evaluation strategies. This category explains how collaboration is evaluated according to the participants.

The content identified in the responses was not very precise and detailed, and this reflects the lack of a comprehensive and systematic tool for assessing collaboration. As can be seen from the table, however, the best way to know whether a young person has collaborative skills is to ask him to do something and observe whether he accomplishes the task in a collaborative way. For this reason, task execution and observation are the two main codes that make up the assessment category (see Table 9 below).

Table 4: Codes That Emerged as Assessment Methods of Collaboration

CATEGORY: ASSESSMENT	PARTICIPANTS (SOURCES)	%	EXCERPTS	%
Observation	27	39.71	28	44.44
Staying with the people	12	17.65	12	19.04
Task performance	26	38.24	27	42.85
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>63</b>	

Figure 12: Frequency of Excerpts Identified as Assessment Methods of Collaboration, by Gender and Category

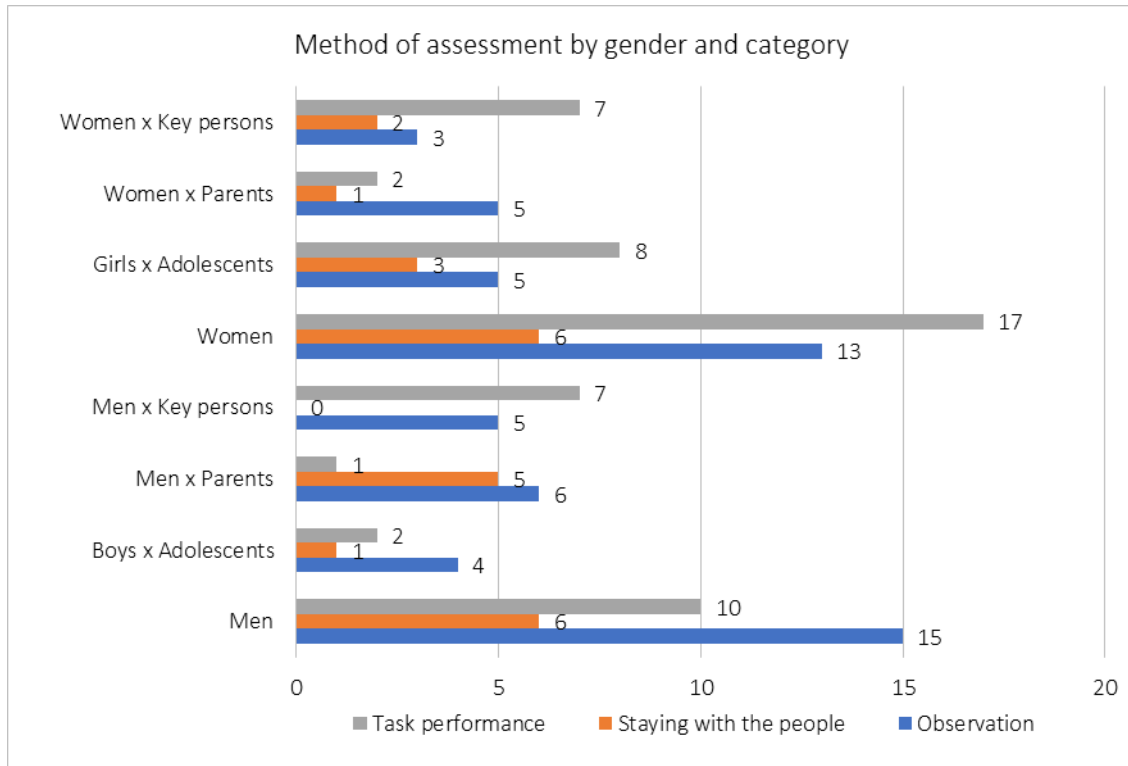


Figure 13: Frequency of Excerpts Identified as Assessment Methods of Collaboration, by District

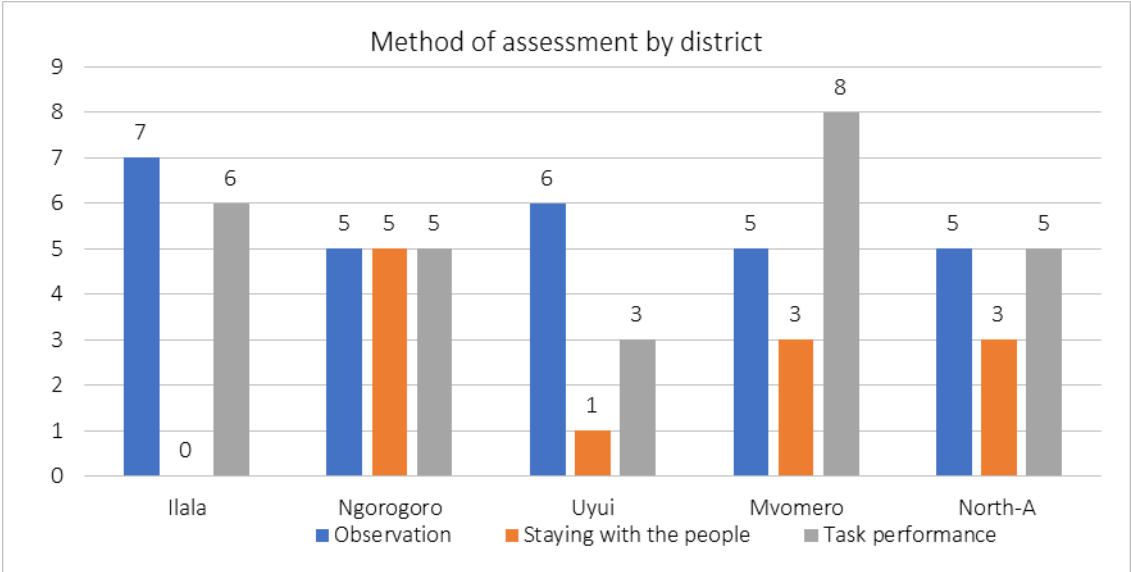


Figure 14: Percentages of Excerpts Identified as Assessment Methods of Collaboration, by Gender

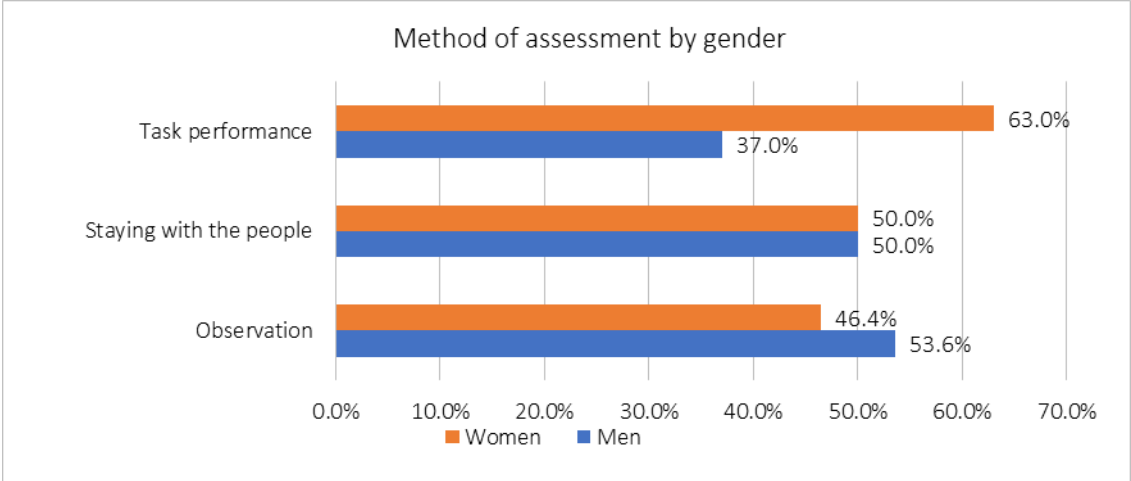
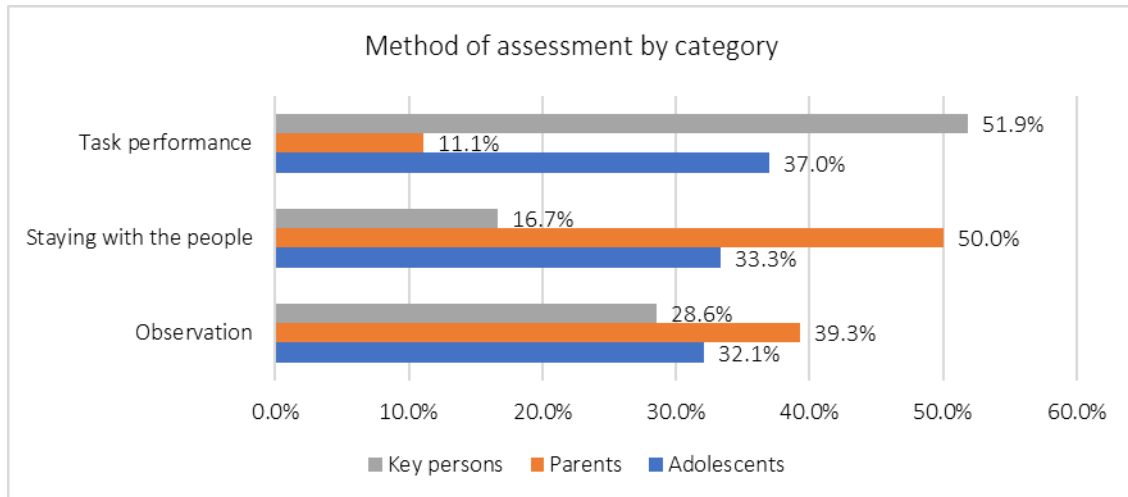


Figure 15: Percentages of Excerpts Identified as Assessment Methods of Collaboration, by Category





As can be observed in Figure 26, observation and task performance account for the 44.44% and 42.85%, respectively, out of 63 excerpts (67 sources). Only a few participants identified *staying with the people* (19.04% of the excerpts) as an effective test for collaboration. The large number of quotations related to *observation* reveals how difficult it is to test collaboration with a tool, since the method of observation is mentioned without any reference to a task or tool to be used when observing. Only general guidelines are given, such as, “watch response when people are together” (T-P-29), “[look] at the group where the person is involved and look at behaviours and hobbies” (T-P-24), or “look at the way a person is advising others” (T-K-36).

Similarly, no precise guidelines are given on task performance, but the information is highly approximate and nonspecific. It was said that an adequate way to test collaboration is to “give a group job” (T-K-41) or “send him/her to work with his/her colleagues,” but no indication was given on the proper task for testing collaboration.

One key person exemplifies this by saying the following:

That is to give her some work to do perhaps with her colleagues. We’ll look at whether she did the work alone or with her colleagues. If she did it with her colleagues, we will know that this person has cooperation and this person has the habit of working with her colleagues for example class works or book assignments. It’s not like those who when you give work will not contribute and will just wait for the work to be done. but she cooperates as required. (T-K-44)

Similar to observation, being with people is also identified as an assessment strategy. Being with others adds some features such as “watching response” (T-P-29) or “[asking] for assistance” (T-A-30) to check whether a teenager is collaborative.

In conclusion, it is interesting to observe that the participants do not struggle to “see” collaboration. They experience it in their daily lives, but constructing a consistent tool or a test is challenging.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

Sixty-seven interviews, 36 women and 31 men, divided into three categories (adolescents, key persons, and parents) and five regions/districts have shed light on a contextualised understanding of collaboration. From the analyses of these interviews, 7 categories and 42 codes (sometimes used interchangeably in more than one category) were identified. The categories that aimed to synthesise the information are definition, subskills, dispositions, behaviours and values, related skills, support systems, and assessment strategies of collaboration.

The interviews analysed in this report were aimed at investigating how Tanzanians understand and conceptualize *collaboration*. The culture, the tradition, and the way of collaborating at the local level give the local perception of this skill its unique qualities.

The literature review conducted prior to this contextualised work led to a consensus around the definition of collaboration as *working together to achieve a common goal* (Care et al., 2016; Kim & Care, 2020; Lai, 2011; Marek et al., 2015, among others). Based on the analysis of the interviews, however, the aspect of *achieving a common goal* is absent or described in other ways; it is usually not related to the achievement of goals in the workplace but most frequently refers to the achievement of the common good of the participants’ community. Since a person belongs to a certain community, that person is also expected to collaborate with the members of that community—the purpose is intrinsic, not extrinsic. It should be noted that the definitions that emerged in the interviews connect with the etymological meaning of collaboration. *Collaboration* comes from a Latin root *com* and *laborare*, meaning to *work together*. Similarly, Ofstedal and Dahlberg (2009) assert that “people who practice true collaboration create a shared vision with joint strategies when working on a problem, issue or goal” (p. 38).

Therefore, one of the most relevant findings from these analyses is the frequency of using the phrase *working together* to define collaboration though an emphasis on work, but also on underscoring the aspect of coming together as members of the same community. It is important to identify the purpose of working together, because it is neither an extrinsic goal nor a dimension of planning specific achievements. An important fact of this result is the frequency with which participants use the term unity as a synonym for collaboration. Working together and being one often go hand in hand in the definition, indicating that one contributes to a whole, and that whole is the purpose of working together.

The findings of this study remind us of the intertwined social and individual aspects of development as recognised both by Piaget and Vygotsky, and they help us reflect on the three different theoretical positions in collaboration research: socio-constructivist, socio-cultural, and shared (or distributed) cognitive approaches. Along the axis between the ‘individual’ and the ‘group’, collaboration can be studied and measured as the individual skills (cognitive) involved in working collaboratively or interacting with a group.

Related to these intertwined social and individual components is the cross-cutting presence of certain values throughout most of the interviews. Even if there was no specific question about values, the participants mentioned respect, love, and unity as necessary prerequisites to collaborating with others.

Regarding the subskills identified by the participants, it is important to note that both men and women mentioned *guidance and counselling* and the area of *relationship skills* (receptive communication) many times.

Support systems are places and contexts in which collaboration is taught and learned. It can be said that they are those places where collaboration is “transferred.” In this regard, it is vital to note the value placed on the family and the school, meaning that collaboration can be taught in these contexts. Factors such as family background, the school context, and friends have been highlighted as relevant in boosting collaboration skills. It is relevant to note that in addition to “places” being mentioned as a support system of collaboration, the act of sharing and helping the community is equally highlighted, because collaboration is often meant as something that happens by doing.

The excerpts related to the assessment method of collaboration remind and corroborate the difficulty of measuring collaboration skills in the existent literature. What seems to be common to most of the participants is the fact that observing behaviour, accomplishing a specific task, or staying with the people can uncover the necessary information to determine whether a person or a sample is collaborative.

In summary, the most relevant conclusion about the contextualised understanding of collaboration in Tanzania is probably the *sense of community* or *sense of belonging* found in most of the definitions, explanations, and characterizations of a collaborative person and their values. Collaboration is not reduced to accomplishing tasks in school or work settings but is considered a way of living and of conceiving of ourselves. This awareness was reflected in the interviews through the following expressions: working with others, togetherness, helping the community, sharing, unity, and the like.



## 4.1 Limitations of the Research

The findings presented in this report should be read in light of the limitations presented throughout the processes of planning, data collection, and data analysis.

Regarding the data collection process, the way the interviewers asked the questions had some influence on the participants' responses. Due to the large number of interviews, different styles were used to conduct them. For instance, some direct styles elicited particular responses due to the inclusion of leading explanations.

Researchers encountered two other difficulties in this process: the lack of familiarity with the participants and the challenge of interacting with the adolescents. Specific skills may have been necessary when interviewing adolescents.

The need to use the English language to ensure a common understanding of the sources and to share the findings with the scientific community and other stakeholders posed a challenge to the participants in terms of their understanding of the questions—especially for adolescents and parents. Most of them responded to the questions in their local languages with the added complexity of translations. The challenge of using the English language as a medium of communication and the need for translation into the local languages meant that during the interviews some nuances and cultural connotations of the words used may have been lost in the process. The findings of this report were reviewed by the Tanzanian researchers for cultural sensitivity.

Regarding the process of data analysis, the complexity of the study (including different skills in different countries) affected the treatment of the documents and the codebook. It was impossible to anticipate all the challenges that would arise during the coding and analysis. Qualitative analysis required a systematic and collaborative process among the researchers involved in reading, analysing, and coding the sources. Given the large number of interviews for such a qualitative study, a large number of researchers was involved in the process, increasing the challenges as well as the richness of the analysis. Nevertheless, different strategies were implemented to guarantee the reliability and accuracy of the findings. On the other hand, the team analysed the interviews in two rounds in order to achieve sufficient inter-rater reliability. Raters maintained constant communication through daily meetings to share challenges, doubts, and suggestions.

Finally, it would have been beneficial to conduct a second round of interviews with the participants to verify whether their understanding of collaboration was included in the findings of this report.

## 4.2 Recommendations for Future Research and Assessment

A unique understanding of the collaboration skills in the Tanzanian context has emerged from this study. This should open a new path of research in order to develop more contextualised studies on life skills based on different cultures and contexts.

New strategies and assessment methods should be informed by these new contextualised studies and concepts. Authentic knowledge about the nature of a skill as used in a particular culture could inspire new methods of assessment.

Certain unique aspects of this study seem to call into question the appropriateness and importance of conducting an inductive process. More studies, including a qualitative participatory approach as a first step in developing assessment tools, are therefore recommended. This finding supports the benefit of the mixed-method approach in assessment studies.

More iterative processes are also recommended in future studies to verify the preliminary findings.

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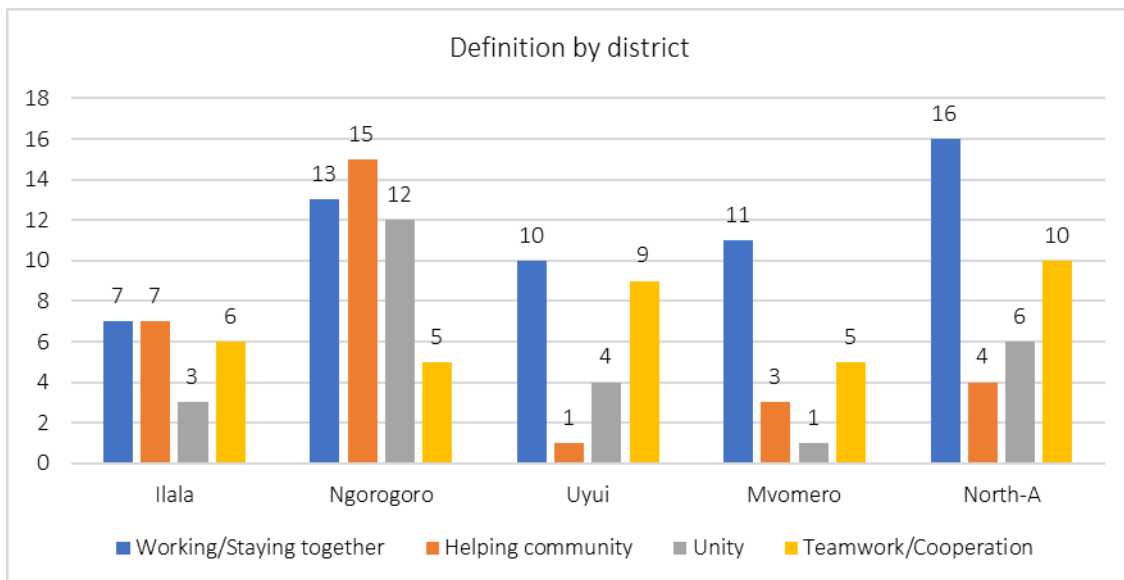
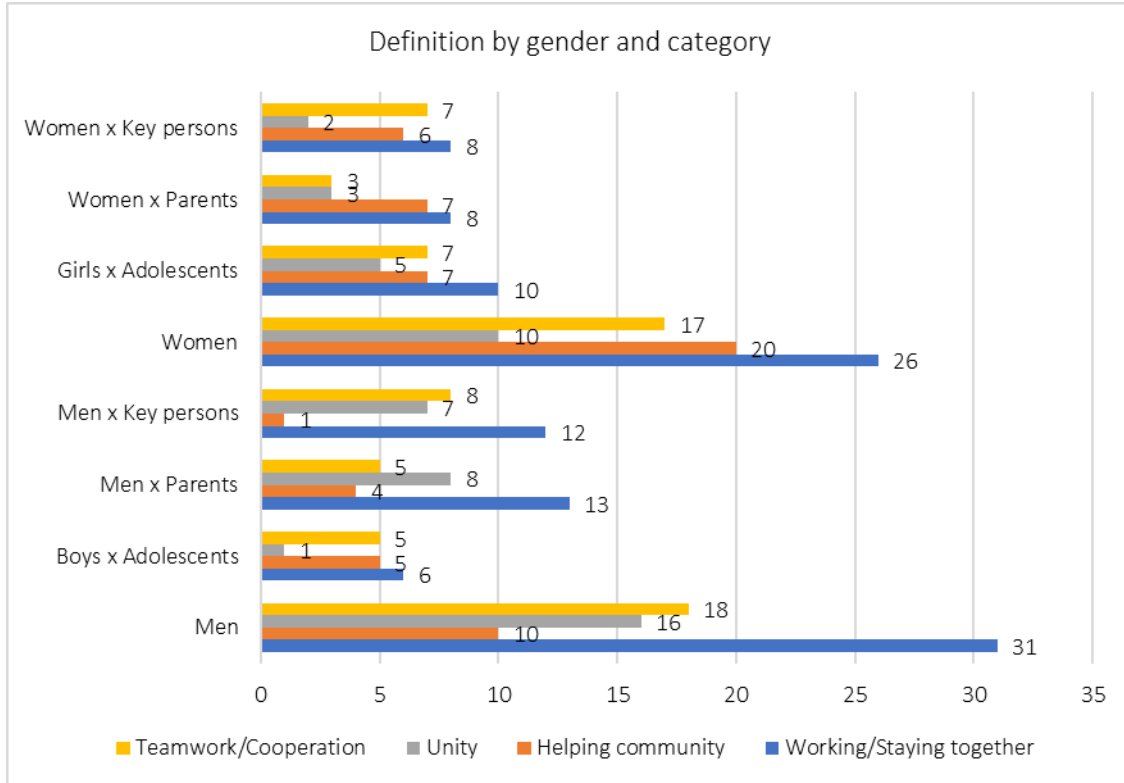
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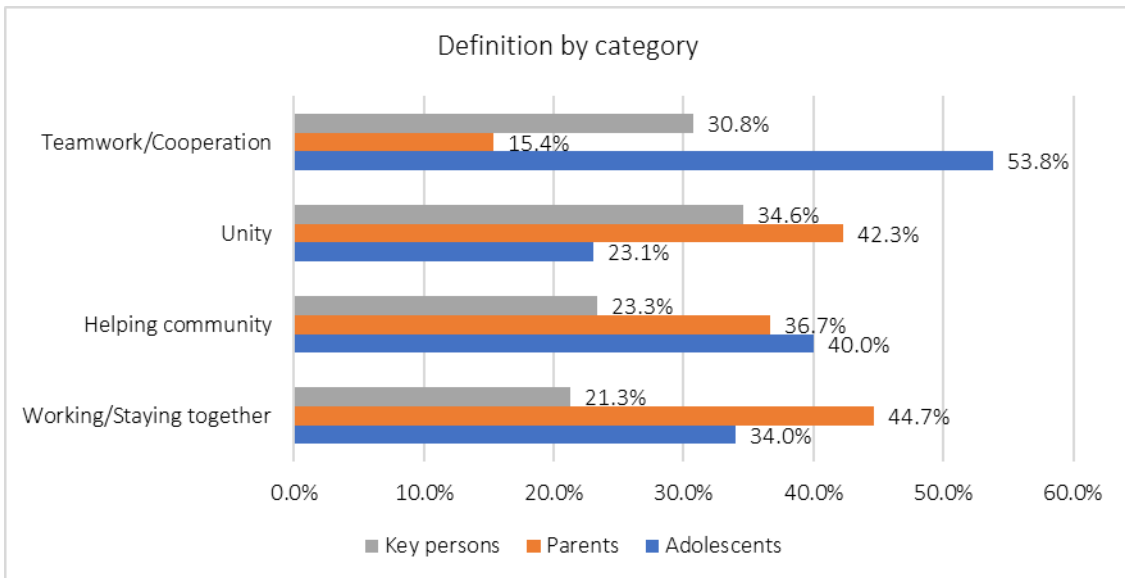
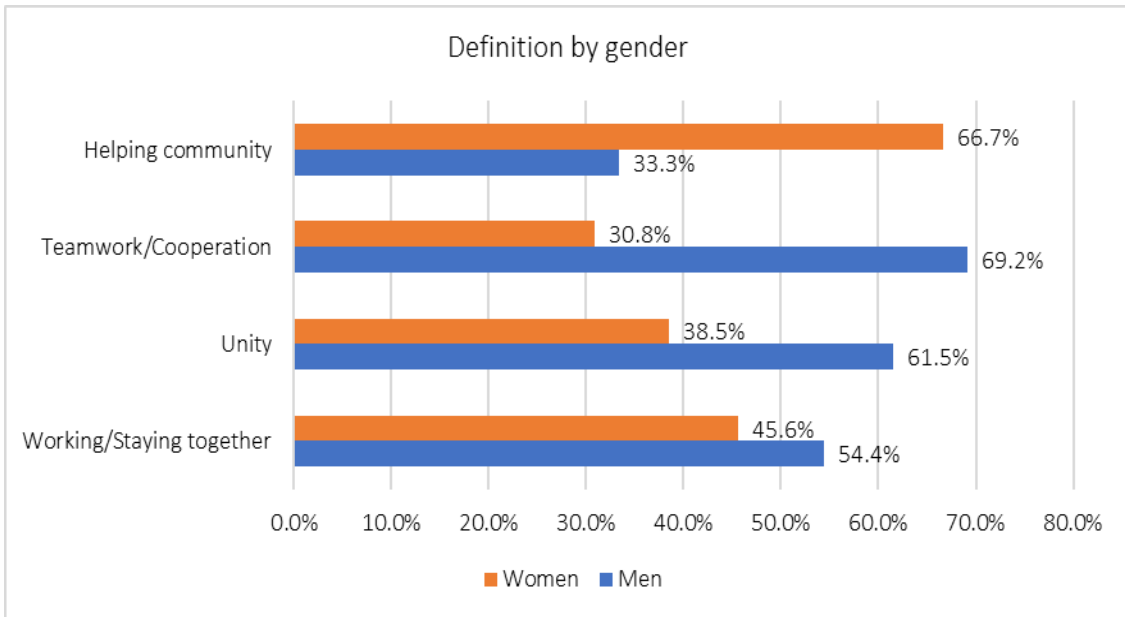
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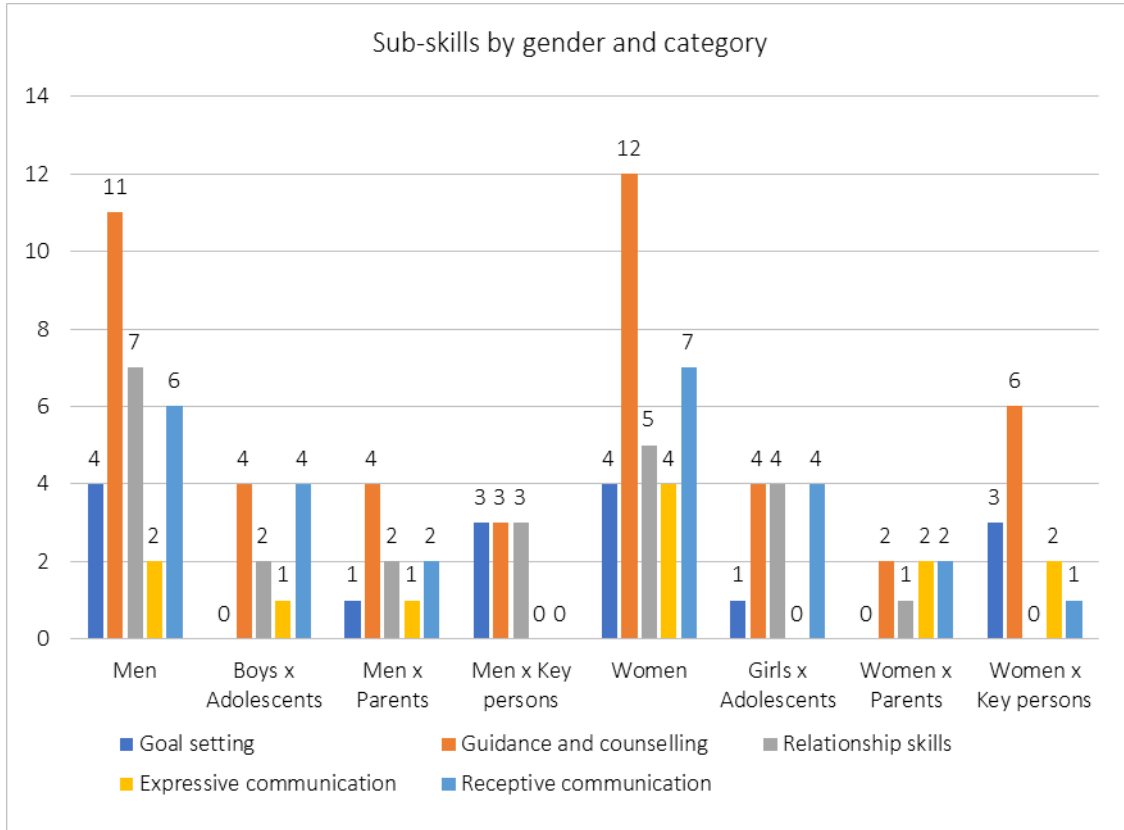
## APPENDICES

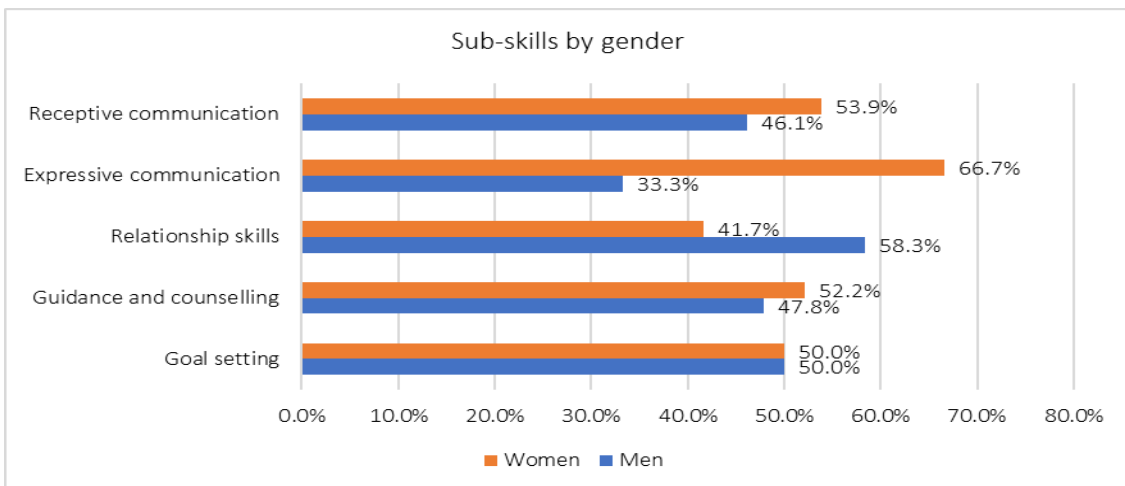
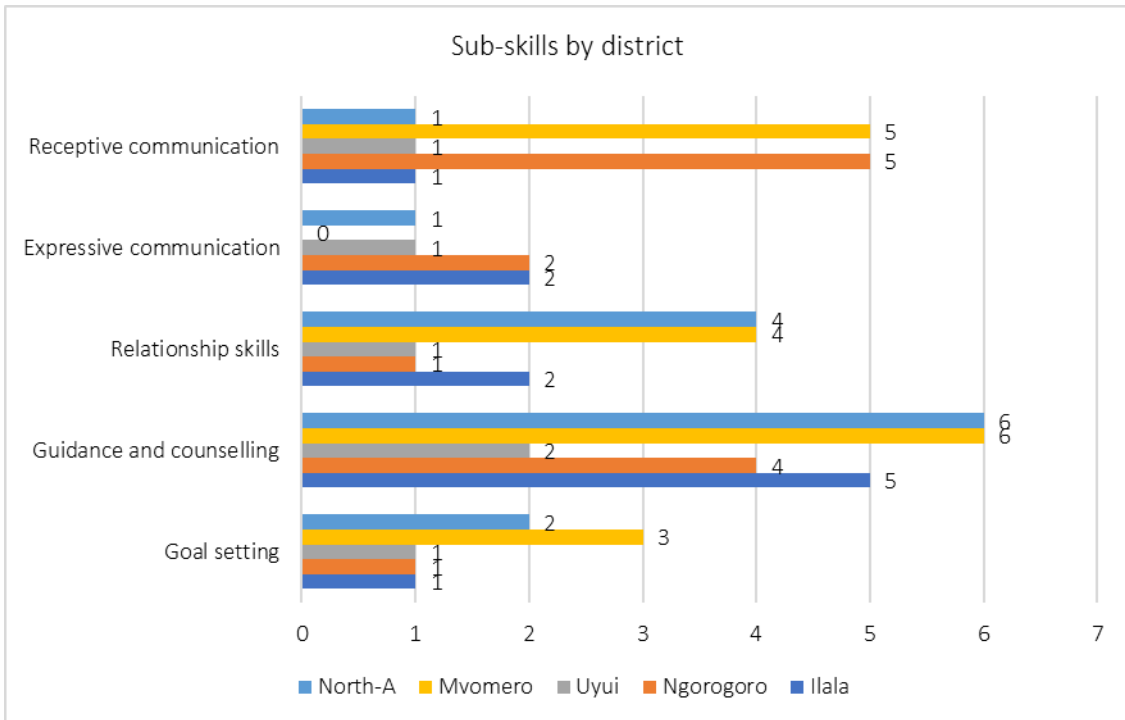
### Appendix 1: Descriptive Analysis of the Main Definition Codes by Descriptors



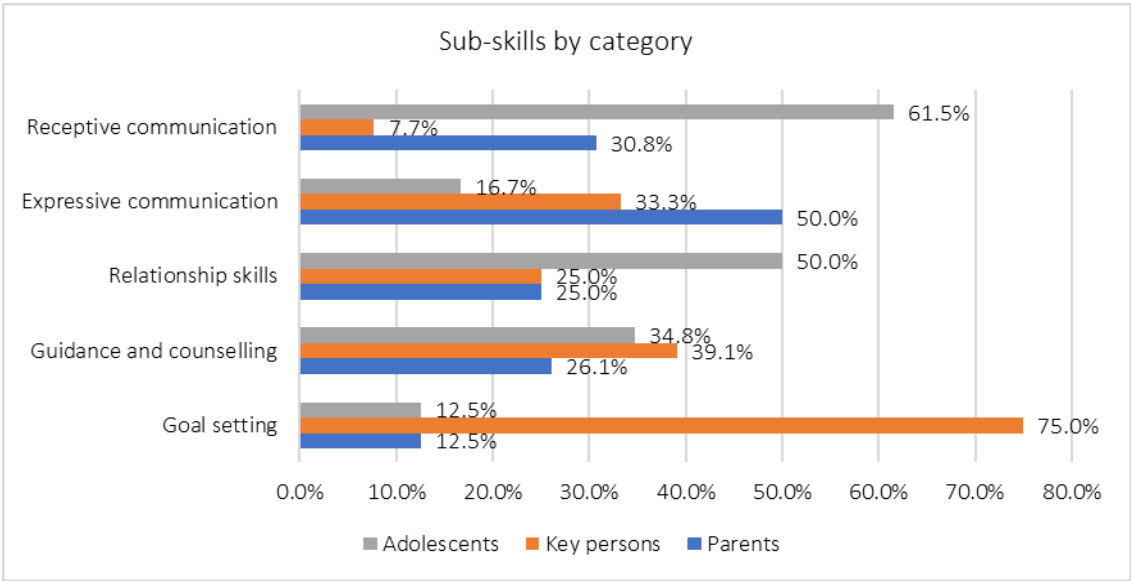


## Appendix 2: Descriptive Analysis of the Subskills by Descriptors

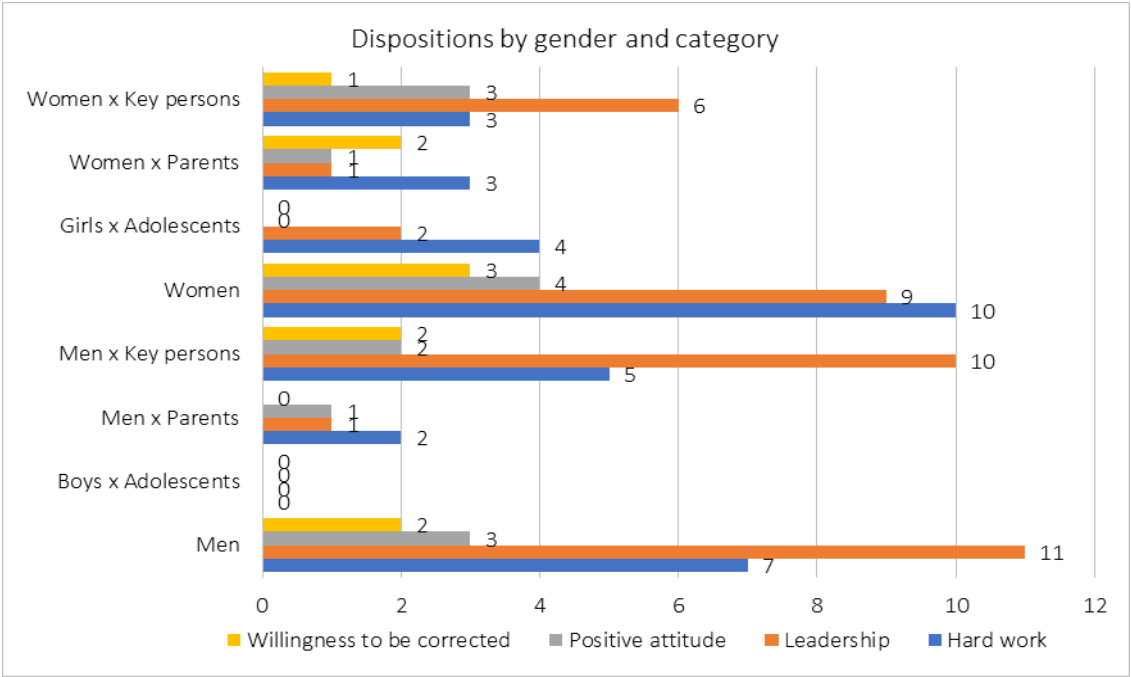


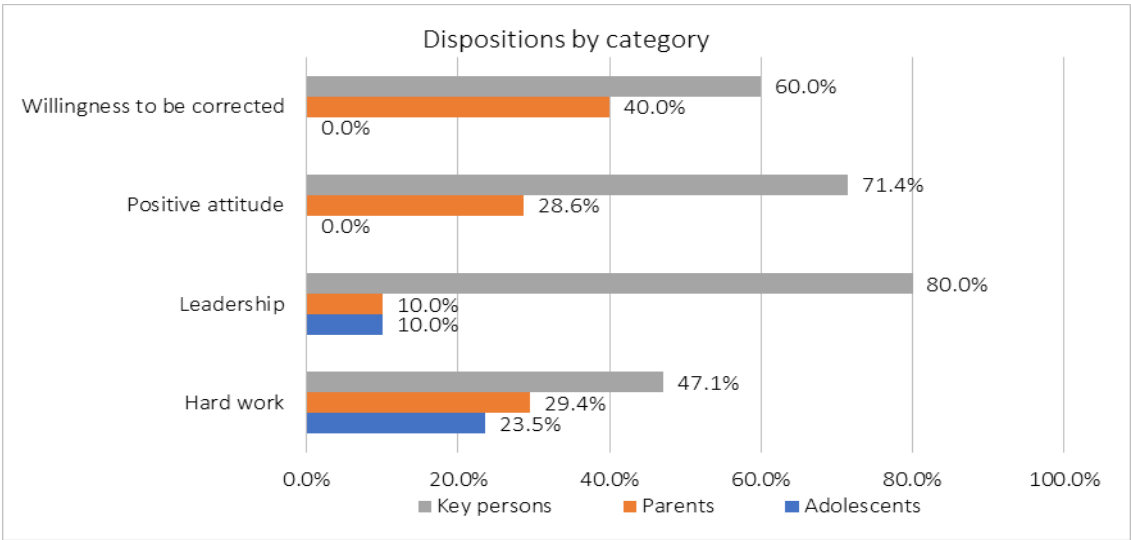
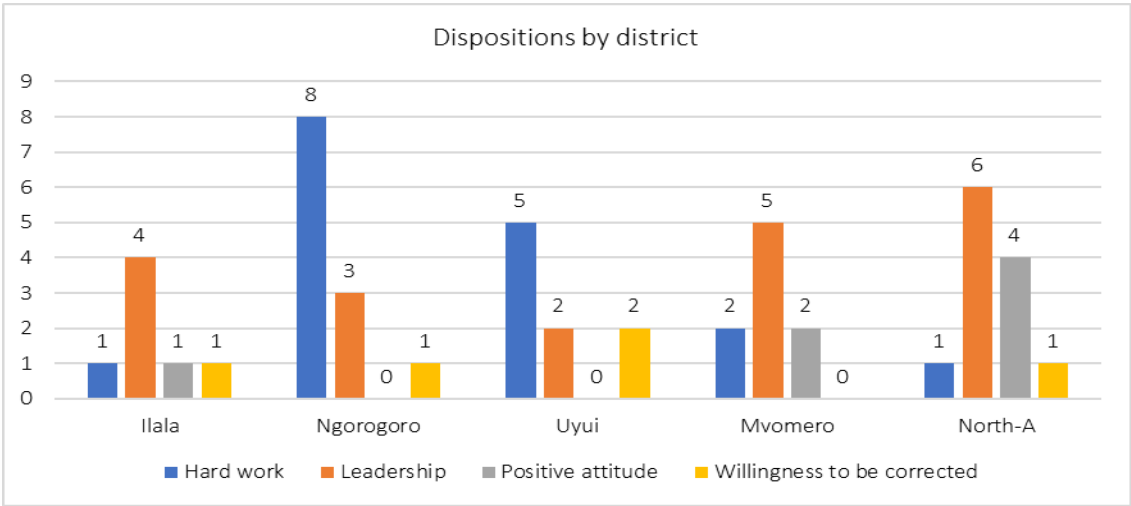


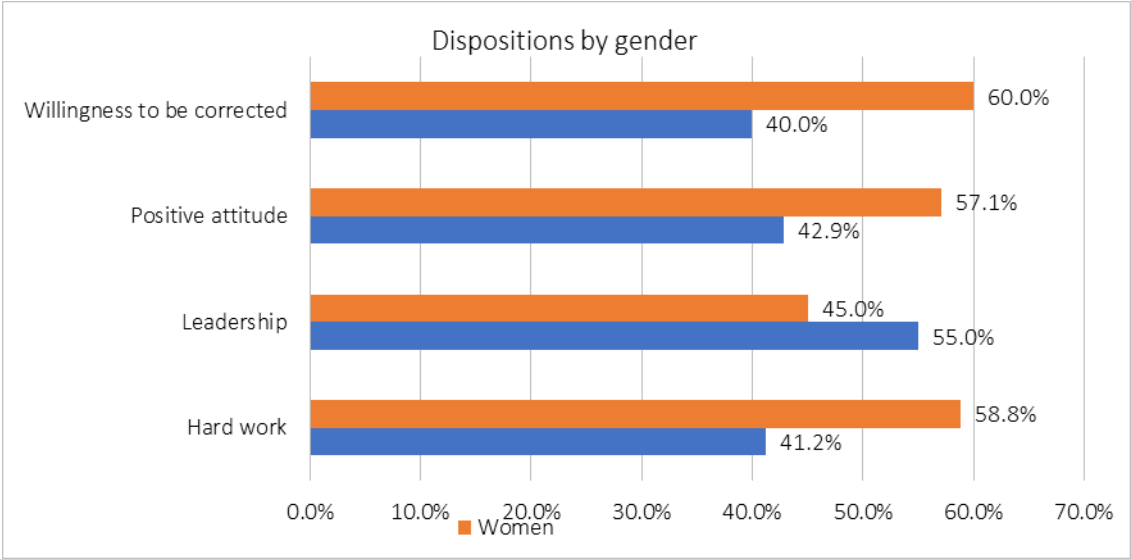




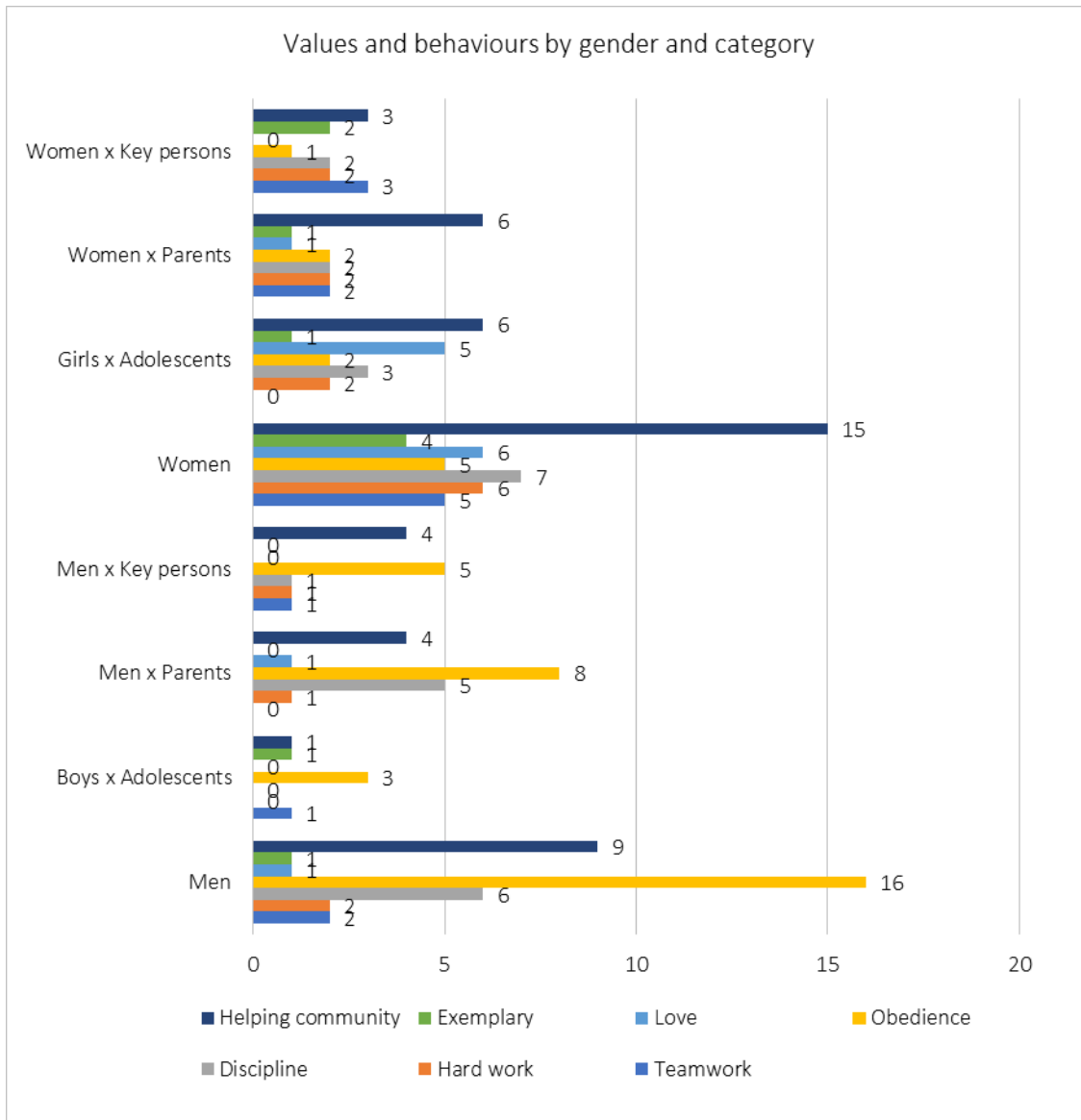
**Appendix 3: Descriptive Analysis of the Dispositions by Descriptors**

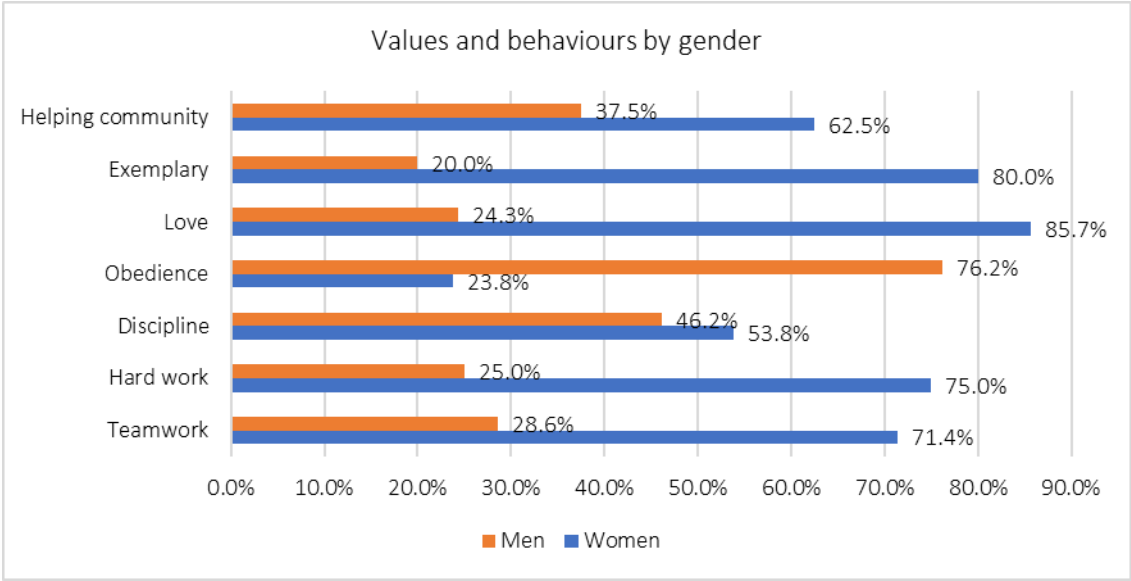
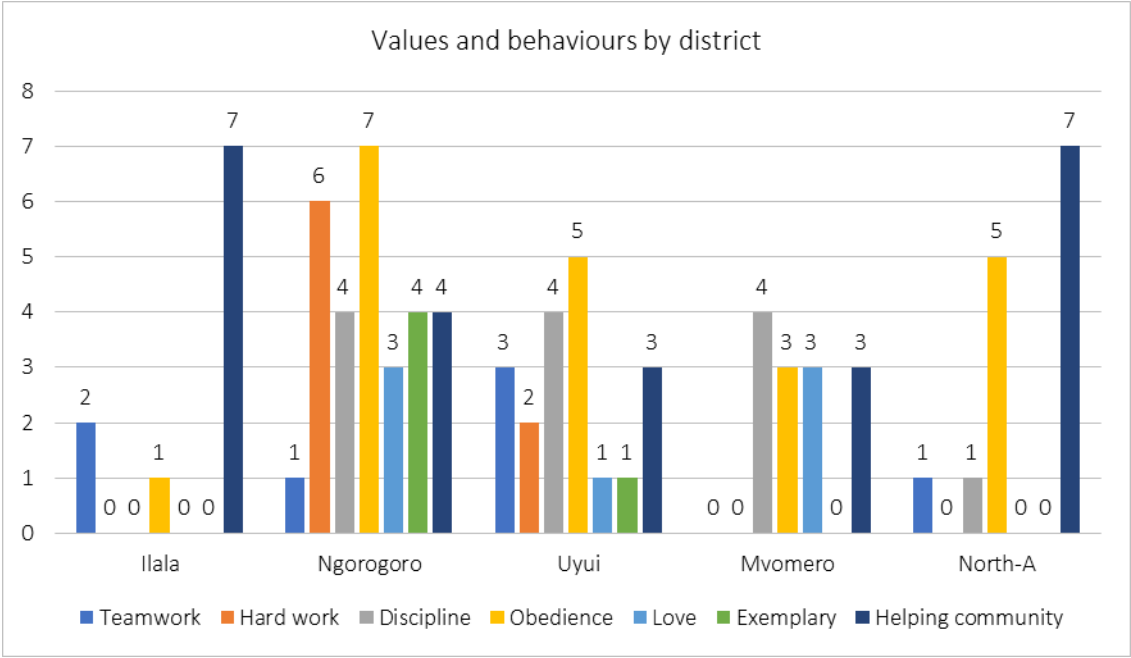




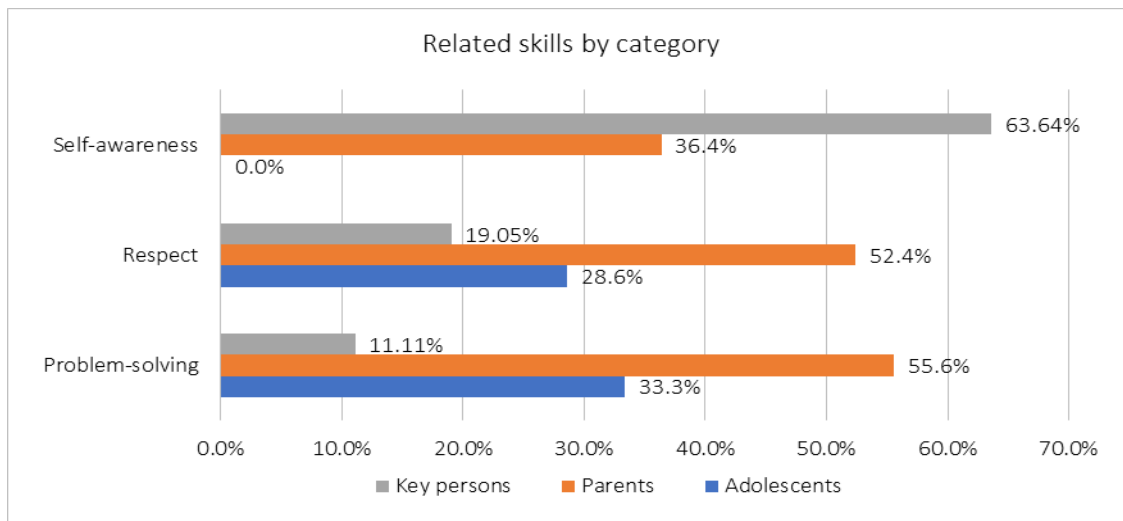
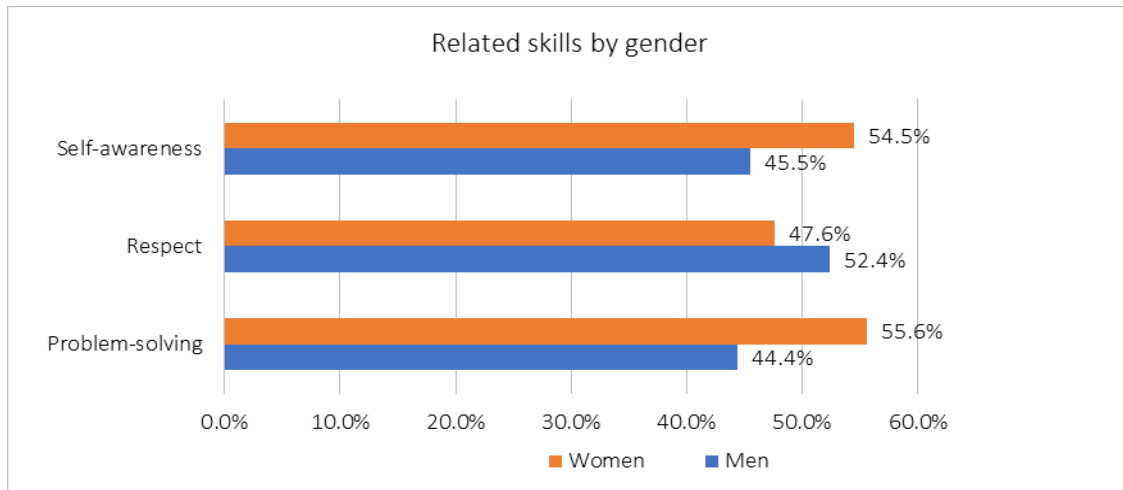


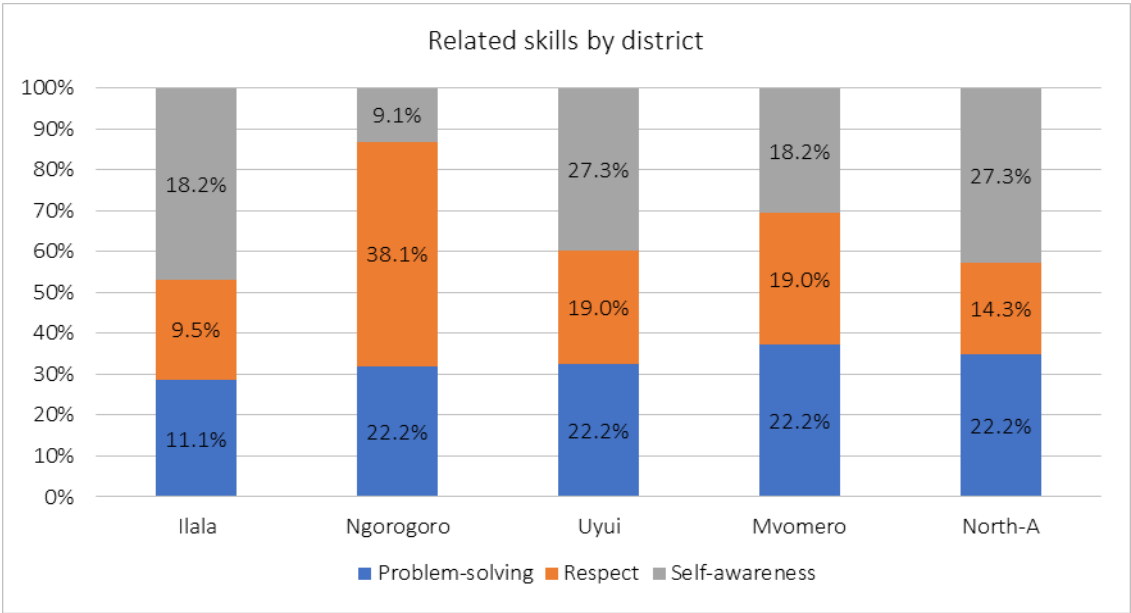
### Appendix 4: Descriptive Analysis of the Values and Behaviours by Descriptors



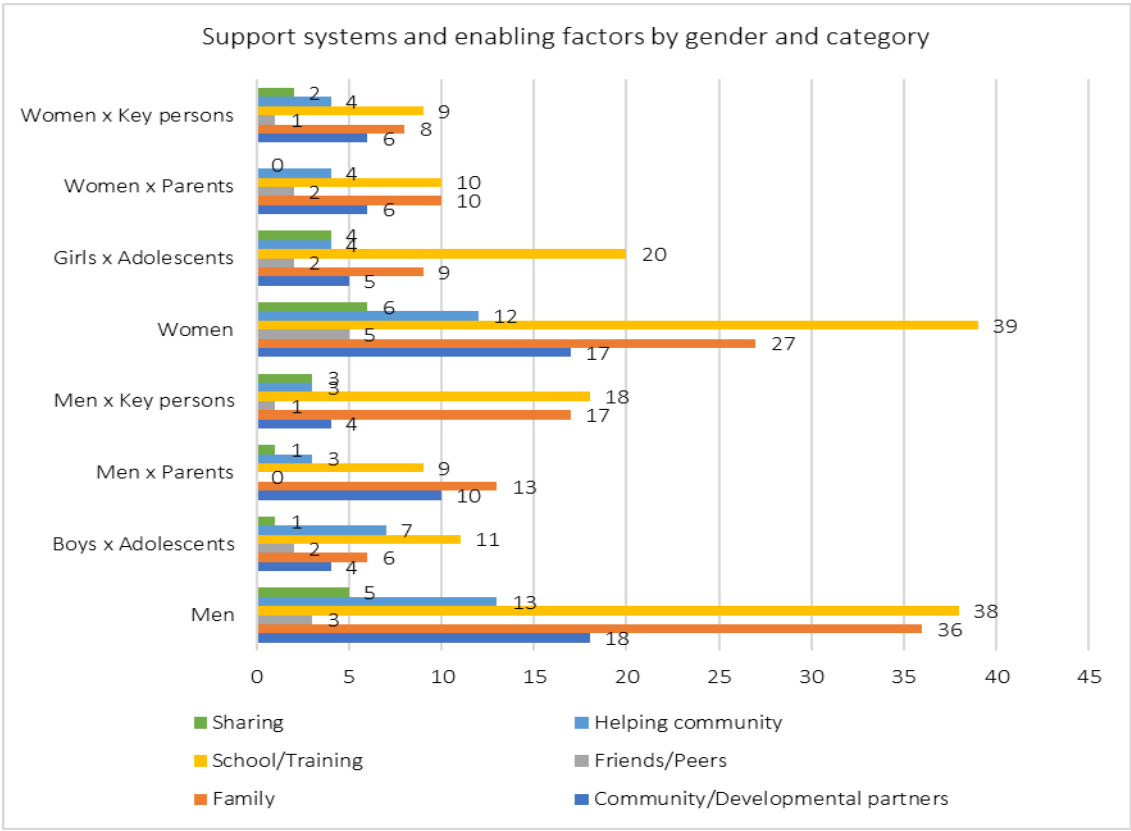


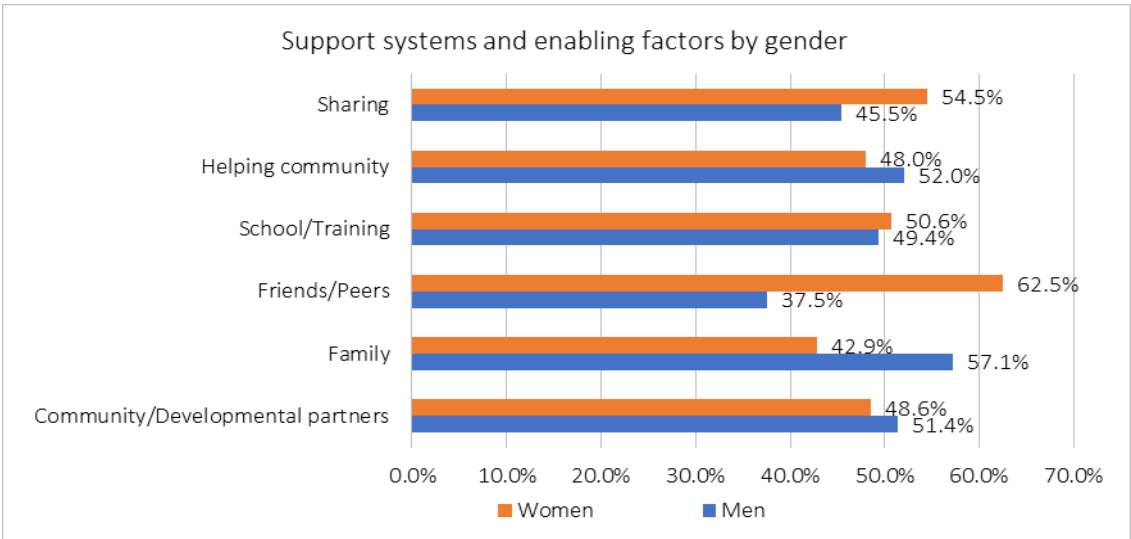
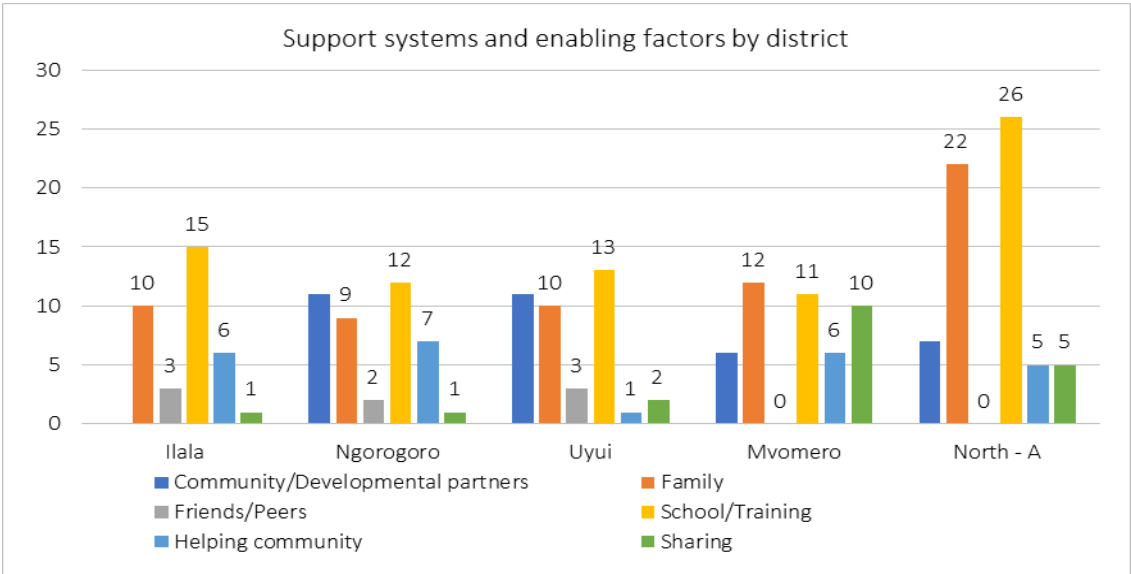
## Appendix 5: Descriptive Analysis of the Related Skills by Descriptors



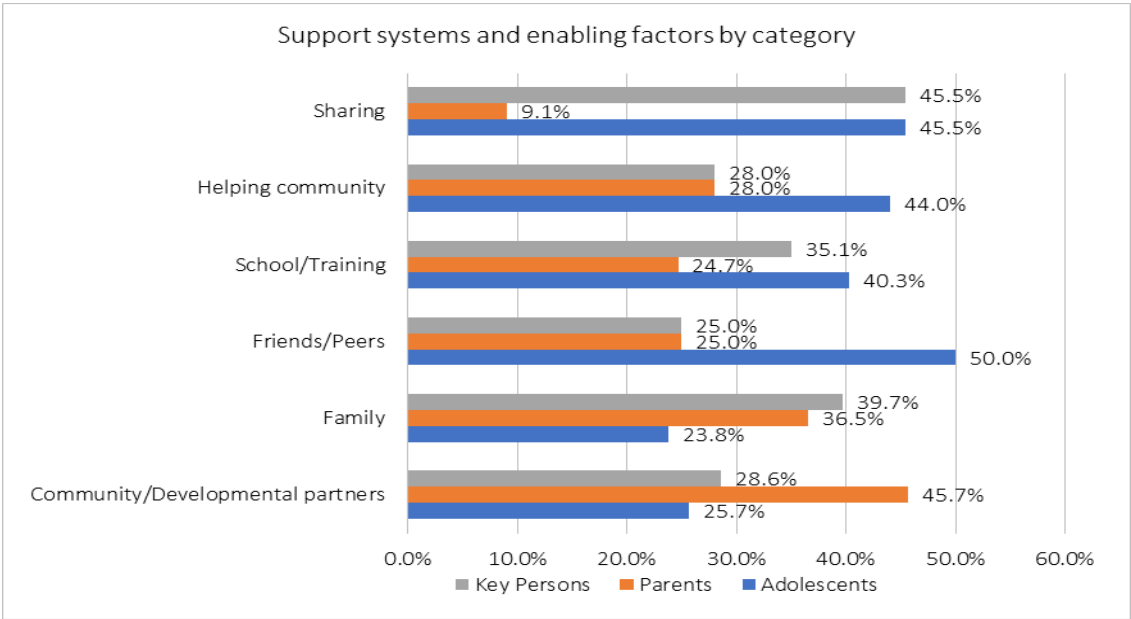


**Appendix 6: Descriptive Analysis of the Support Systems and Enabling Factors, by Descriptors**









**Appendix 7: Descriptive Analysis of the Assessment Methods by Descriptors**

