

The Effects of Tourism on the Socio-Economic Activities of Local Communities Neighboring Lake Manyara

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Abstract

This study examined the socio-economic effects of tourism on local communities neighboring Lake Manyara National Park in Tanzania, with particular emphasis on tourism multiplier effects and livelihood outcomes. A mixed-methods approach and cross-sectional research design were employed, involving 108 respondents comprising local households, tourism business operators, and park management officials. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic content analysis. The findings indicate that tourism significantly contributes to local economic development through employment creation, income generation, small business expansion, and infrastructure improvement. In addition, tourism supports social development through enhanced access to education, healthcare, and cultural promotion. However, the results also reveal structural challenges, including unequal distribution of benefits, weak integration into productive sectors, and increasing dependence on tourism as a primary livelihood source. The study concludes that while tourism generates measurable socio-economic benefits, its multiplier effects remain uneven and constrained by limited local participation and weak economic linkages. These findings highlight the need for policies that strengthen inclusive economic integration and enhance the sustainability of tourism-driven livelihoods.

Keywords: *Tourism, Socio-economic impacts, Local communities, Livelihoods, Tourism multiplier effects, Tanzania.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is globally known to trigger socio-economic growth, but it has a disproportionate impact on the local socio-economic development especially in the localities near conservation zones, which is a controversial topic. The tourism industry in the world contributed to about 9.1 per cent of world GDP and employed more than 330 million people in 2023, which is a high recovery following COVID-19 pandemic (WTTC, 2024). Although such numbers are economically important, they conceal one vital question: does tourism development lead to significant and fair local population benefits. More researchers assert that aggregate growth data does not reflect inequalities in income distribution, opportunity accessibility, and livelihood gains at the local level (García and Blanco, 2023; Liu et al., 2023).

Domestic tourism as a more robust and inclusive avenue of economic development has emerged in response to global shocks and structural weaknesses related to international tourism. Domestic tourism constitutes more than 70 percent of the total tourism expenditure across the world, and it is a key factor in income redistribution in national economies (UNWTO, 2023). It is commonly propagated in developing nations as a tool of increasing local engagement, empowering small and average businesses, and boosting rural livelihoods (Haulle et al., 2024). Nevertheless, even though its policy relevance is on the rise, there is a paucity of empirical data on the impact of domestic tourism on socio-economic activities at the community level, especially in conservation-proximate areas where resource access is limited.

The context of Tanzania provides an interesting example to study these dynamics. Tourism continues to be a significant part of the national economy, directly contributing 5.1 per cent to GDP and indirectly and indirectly adding over 17 per cent (Mwipopo & Massawe, 2024; WTTC, 2024). Recent statistics show that in 2023, Tanzania registered over 1.8 million visitors of international tourist arrivals, as well as a steady growth in domestic tourism due to government-based programs encouraging domestic tourism (NBS, 2024). Regarding this expansion, recent findings indicate the unequal nature of tourism changes, as many neighboural populations have had minimal gains in earnings, job creation, and diversification of their economies (Msangeni et al., 2024; Mmbaga et al., 2024). This questions the sustainability and inclusiveness of development driven by tourism.

The socio-economic impacts of tourism are multidimensional. Tourism has direct, indirect, and induced effects that affect employment and household income as well as local business development. Simultaneously, it may lead to infrastructure improvement and better access to services. Nevertheless, many challenges typically accompany these advantages, such as the unequal distribution of benefits, increased expenses of living, reduced access to land and natural resources, and a lack of representation of local communities in the decision-making process (Kessy et al., 2025; Kiffner et al., 2026). These tensions are especially acute in the circumstances of safeguarding where conservation goals can be opposed to the livelihood requirements of the locals.

These challenges are exemplified in the Lake Manyara Basin. Being included in the Tanzanian Northern Tourism Circuit, Lake Manyara National Park is a focal point of massive tourist arrivals because of its ecological diversity and strategic position. Nevertheless, the adjacent communities experience continuing limitations, such as human-wildlife interactions, land-use demands, and the lack of access to the tourism-related advantage (Janssens et al., 2021; Cheeseman, 2024). Empirical research on the wider Manyara ecosystem suggests that revenues and job opportunities in tourism tend to be centralized in the hands of external actors, with local populations being included only peripherally in tourism value chains (Mmbaga et al., 2024; Kulunge et al., 2026). Such conditions result in a lack of alignment between local livelihood improvement and tourism development.

An in-depth analysis of available literature shows a gap. The literature in the Lake Manyara area has mostly concentrated on community involvement, conservation performance, or macroeconomic benefits of tourism and little is done to understand the impacts of tourism especially domestic tourism on the socio-economic activities at the household and community levels (Melubo et al., 2024; Mwipopo and Massawe, 2024). Moreover, empirical analysis of the tourism multiplier effects and how they are influencing local livelihoods is inadequate. This gap constrains insight into whether tourism development is a source of significant socio-economic change or just perpetuation of existing disparities.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to evaluate how tourism impacts the socio-economic life of communities surrounding Lake Manyara National Park and, in particular, the impacts of tourism-on-tourism multiplier effects, distribution of benefits, and livelihoods. Addressing this gap, the study will add to the evidence base on the development of inclusive tourism

and contribute to insights on policy interventions to enhance the socio-economic well-being of communities in the conservation fields.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Approach

The study used cross-sectional research design with pragmatist research paradigm which combined both the quantitative and qualitative methodology. The mixed-methods design was selected to ensure that the effects of tourism could be properly evaluated through the integration of quantifiable socio-economic dimensions with the contextual knowledge of the local stakeholders. This method is highly suggested in tourism and development research in which the numeric patterns and the lived experiences are required to clarify the complex socio-economic factors (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018; Liu et al., 2023). The cross-sectional design enabled gathering of data at a particular time, which was appropriate in studying the status of tourism-related socio-economic activities and their related multiplier impacts within local communities.

Study Area

The research was carried out in Kibaoni village, which contains Kilimamoja and Chemchem sub-villages within Manyara Town, which is about 37 km off Lake Manyara National Park. It was chosen purposely because of its proximity to the park, and the high density of tourism-related businesses, such as lodges, campsites, curio shops, cultural tourism enterprises, and tour guiding businesses. Kibaoni is an important human-wildlife interface within the Lake Manyara ecosystem, which involves tourism activities and livelihoods. There is regular tourist travel in the area related to the Northern Tourism Circuit, which boosts local economic operations, including employment in hospitality services, craft sales, and provision of agricultural products to tourism facilities.

Regardless of these opportunities, the region has numerous context-specific issues, including disproportionate allocation of the tourism benefits, under-involvement of the local communities in high-value tourism segments, increased living expenses, and environmental strains associated with tourism growth. The same trends have been documented in the community around the conservation zones in northern Tanzania, where the increase in tourism does not necessarily result in livelihood gains that are reasonable and equitable (Mmbaga et al., 2024; Kessy et al., 2025). These features render Kibaoni a suitable place to analyze the socio-economic impacts of tourism on the community level.

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The study targeted three categories of respondents: local households, tourism business operators, and institutional stakeholders within Kibaoni village. The household population consisted of 1,155 households, from which a sample of 92 household heads was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula with a 10% margin of error. Household respondents were selected through simple random sampling using village registers as the sampling frame. Each household was assigned a unique identification number and selected through a random number generation procedure, ensuring equal probability of inclusion and minimizing selection bias.

In addition, 26 key informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in tourism-related activities and governance. These included accommodation managers, tour guides, curio shop owners, village leaders, and officials from Lake Manyara National Park. This ensured that participants possessed relevant knowledge and experience necessary for in-depth analysis. A total of 118 respondents were targeted, of which 108 participated in the study, resulting in a response rate of 91.5%. This rate is considered adequate for statistical analysis and generalization in social science research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Data Collection, Data Analysis and Measurement of Variables.

Structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather primary data. Household heads were given questionnaires in English and Swahili. To provide consistency and translational accuracy of meaning, the instrument was translated through a forward-backward translation process.

The questionnaire was formulated on the foundation of the existing literature on the tourism effects and rural livelihoods (García and Blanco, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). It was composed of closed-ended questions organized by major variables in line with the objectives of the study. Tourism was also assessed in terms of its economic contribution through indicators like employment, generation of income and business growth. The social impacts were measured by access to infrastructure, education, healthcare services, and cultural preservation. To quantify the negative effects, the indicators used were environmental degradation, social disruption, cultural erosion, economic dependence and land-related pressures.

Attitudinal variables were all measured on a five-point Likert scale between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree) which enabled a standardized measurement of perceptions and experiences. The descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percentages, were used to analyze quantitative data and this aligns with the formatting of the results provided in this study (). Thematic content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data (interviews and focus group discussions) to determine common patterns and explanations that supplemented quantitative data. The data were pre-cleaned to ensure completeness, consistency, and accuracy. Only complete questionnaires were included, and the responses were coded and verified then input into SPSS version 27.

Pilot Testing, Reliability, and Validity

A pilot study involving 12 respondents of a nearby community with similar socio-economic background was administered to evaluate the clarity, relevance and reliability of the research instruments. The pilot also provided feedback that resulted in clarification of the ambiguous items and better sequencing of the questions. Cronbachs Alpha was used to evaluate reliability of measurement scales. The total reliability coefficient was 0.78, which is sufficient internal consistency to publish social science research (Hair et al., 2019).

Multiple procedures were used to guarantee validity. Expert validation of the instruments ensured content validity by ensuring that they met study objectives. Grounding of measuring variables through the existing literature on tourism and socio-economic impacts guaranteed construct validity. Moreover, methodological triangulation, which was attained by using questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions, strengthened the credibility of the findings and their validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study sampled respondents based on key demographic variables, including gender, age, education level, and occupation. Males constituted a slightly higher proportion at 53.7% compared to females at 46.3%, indicating a modest gender imbalance that could influence participation in tourism-related activities, particularly given gendered disparities in access to economic opportunities (Rogan et al., 2020).

Table 1:
Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic	Response options	Tick	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	58	53.7
	Female	50	46.3
Age of respondents	18-30	30	27.8
	31-45	40	37.1
	46-60	25	23.1
	60+	13	12
Educational Level	Primary School	10	9.3
	Secondary School	20	18.5
	Certificate	15	13.9
	Diploma	25	23.1
	Bachelor Degree	30	27.8
Occupation	employed	60	55.5
	self-employed	30	27.8
	unemployed	18	16.7

Age distribution showed that the largest age group was between 31–45 years (37.1%), followed by 18–30 years (27.8%), 46–60 years (23.1%), and above 60 years (12%). This suggests a predominantly mature and economically active sample, which aligns with findings that this age bracket is often more involved in and benefits more from tourism initiatives (Jovicic, 2022).

Regarding education, 27.8% of respondents held a bachelor's degree, 23.1% a diploma, 18.5% secondary education, 13.9% a certificate, 9.3% primary education, and 7.4% had no formal education. The relatively high education levels suggest that the community is well-prepared to engage with tourism initiatives, as education has been linked to increased participation in tourism development (Mutana & Mukwada, 2021). Occupation-wise, 55.5% were employed, 27.8% self-employed, and 16.7% unemployed, indicating an economically active population. This employment pattern supports the notion that tourism may have positive multiplier effects on local livelihoods, as employment directly contributes to economic growth in tourism areas (García & Blanco, 2023).

Socio-economic activities Driven by Tourism

In this section, respondents were asked about any other socio-economic activities performed because of the presence of tourism activities in Lake Manyara National Park. The assessment of local community participation in tourism activities surrounding Lake Manyara National Park indicates a

high level of engagement, with all respondents (100%) acknowledging the presence of other socioeconomic activities resulting from tourism activities in the area. The following are various social economic activities specified by respondents because of the presence of tourism.

Table 2:
Social Economic Activities Performed

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Job Creation	80	96.4
Small Business Development	77	92.8
Infrastructure Development	71	85.5
Education and Training	75	90.4

The findings presented in Table 2 outline the socio-economic activities that have taken place because of tourism activities around Lake Manyara National Park. The study shows that 96.4% of respondents reported job creation as a key socio-economic activity from tourism. This indicates that tourism has provided employment opportunities for residents. 92.8% of respondents indicated that tourism has been involved in the development of small businesses. This includes enterprises such as restaurants, transport services, and other businesses provided to tourists. Moreover 85.5% of respondents mentioned improvements in infrastructure due to tourism. This involves the construction and enhancement of roads, communication networks, and other public facilities that benefit both tourists and the local community. Furthermore 90.4% of respondents highlighted the importance of education and training initiatives linked to tourism. These programs likely focus on enhancing skills relevant to the tourism industry, such as hospitality management, language skills, and environmental conservation.

The research conducted interviews to get responses if there any other social economic activities performed as a result of the presence of tourism activities in Lake Manyara National Park: Within interview session Lake Manyara National Park Officials, Village Executive Officers, Tour Guides and Managers of accommodation establishments were asked to explain the presence and mention social economic activities performed as a result of the presence of tourism activities in Lake Manyara National Park. Respondents responded to this question that,

As an official of Lake Manyara National Park, I've witnessed a remarkable surge in local employment opportunities, from park rangers to administrative roles. This influx not only bolsters the local economy but also fosters a deep sense of pride and ownership among the community towards the park. Additionally, revenue from tourism has been reinvested into vital community development projects like schools and healthcare

facilities, significantly enhancing the quality of life for nearby residents
(Interviewed Manyara National Park Official A, 02/10/2023).

The quote implies that tourism has become a key economic engine in the region, fostering both income generation and a growing emotional investment by locals in the park's success. It suggests a transformation of local identity through employment linked to tourism.

The tourism boom in Lake Manyara National Park has paved the way for local entrepreneurs to thrive. From artisans selling crafts to establishing businesses catering to tourists, individuals have found sustainable sources of income. This economic empowerment not only benefits individuals but also strengthens the local economy, creating a ripple effect of prosperity throughout the community (Interviewed Village Executive Officer B, 16/10/2023).

This reflects how tourism can stimulate grassroots entrepreneurship, enabling individuals to transition from informal to sustainable livelihoods. It highlights tourism's role as a catalyst for community self-sufficiency and financial empowerment.

The presence of tourism activities has facilitated profound cultural exchanges between visitors and locals. Through these interactions, traditions, stories, and customs are shared, enabling mutual understanding and respect. Furthermore, the development of infrastructure in surrounding areas, including improved roads and sanitation facilities, not only caters to tourist needs but also benefits the local community, enhancing overall living standards (Interviewed Tour Guide A, 26/10/2023).

The statement implies that tourism infrastructure has spillover benefits beyond visitors, directly contributing to long-term improvements in public services and living conditions for residents.

Socio-Economic Support to Local Communities through Tourism-Related Projects

Table 3 presents socio-economic initiatives supporting local communities as a result of tourism activities around Lake Manyara National Park.

Table 3:
Projects Supporting Local Communities as A Result of Tourism Activities

Response options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Establishment of development projects	70	84.3
Funding Health Care projects	20	24.1
Local and International Scholarships	15	18.1
Building and renovating education facilities	60	72.
Development of Financial Institutions	10	12.0

The findings indicate that tourism contributes primarily to community development through infrastructure-oriented projects, with 84.3% of respondents reporting the establishment of development projects and 72% highlighting investments in education facilities. These interventions reflect tourism’s role in enhancing human capital and public service provision. However, support in critical welfare sectors remains limited, as only 24.1% of respondents reported healthcare funding and 18.1% indicated access to scholarships. Financial inclusion initiatives were least reported (12%), suggesting weak integration of local communities into formal economic systems. Overall, the results demonstrate that while tourism contributes to visible development outcomes, its socio-economic benefits remain uneven, with stronger emphasis on physical infrastructure than on long-term capacity building and financial empowerment.

This study aimed to collect interview answers on tourism activities performed by local communities adjacent to Lake Manyara National Park. During interview Lake Manyara National Park Officials, Village Executive Officers, Tour Guides and Managers of accommodation establishments were asked if there are any tourism activities performed by local communities adjacent to Lake Manyara National Park and required to mention them. Respondents answered that,

It is indeed the case that several tourism activities are performed by local communities situated in the vicinity of Lake Manyara National Park. One such activity is cultural tours, during which local communities showcase their traditions, dances, and crafts to visitors. These tours offer visitors a unique insight into the local culture and heritage, enhancing their overall experience of the region (Interviewed Manyara National Park Official A, 02/10/2023).

This highlights how tourism encourages cultural performance and preservation. It suggests that locals are actively curating their heritage for visitor engagement, turning culture into both an educational and economic asset.

There are guided walks led by knowledgeable community members who provide information about the park’s flora and fauna, as well as the importance of conservation efforts. They offer visitors the opportunity to

connect with nature while supporting the local community (Interviewed Manyara National Park Official B, 02/10/2023).

The quote implies that community members serve as interpreters of nature, transferring local ecological knowledge to tourists. It shows their critical role in shaping visitor understanding of environmental values.

Certainly, the local communities adjacent to Lake Manyara National Park engage in various tourism activities. One of the activities is community-based ecotourism projects where visitors can participate in tree planting and other conservation activities alongside community members. This promotes environmental awareness and sustainable tourism practices (Interviewed Village Executive Officer A, 16/10/2023).

This points to the evolution of tourism into a participatory, eco-conscious model. It implies that community-led conservation efforts are merging with visitor experiences to promote responsible tourism behavior.

Local communities adjacent to Lake Manyara National Park offer a range of tourism activities. One popular activity is bird-watching tours led by local guides who are well-versed in the park's avian species. Visitors spot a variety of bird species while learning about their habitats and behaviors (Interviewed Tour Guide E, 26/10/2023).

This implies a shift toward low-impact, alternative tourism experiences. It highlights how community engagement diversifies tourism formats and connects visitors to tranquil, immersive environments.

The communities organize cultural festivals and events that celebrate their traditions, music, and food. These events attract tourists who are interested in experiencing the vibrant culture of the local communities while contributing to their economic well-being (Interviewed Tour Guide F, 26/10/2023).

The quote suggests that tourism is becoming a platform for cultural celebration and public diplomacy. It implies that organized cultural events serve as both economic ventures and tools for community pride.

Yes, there are several tourism activities facilitated by local communities adjacent to Lake Manyara National Park. One such activity is cultural homestays where visitors can stay with local families, experiencing their daily life, traditions, and customs firsthand. It offers a more authentic and immersive travel experience for guests (Interviewed Managers of Accommodation Establishments C, 02/10/2023).

This reflects innovation in local tourism practices, promoting physical activity and environmental consciousness. It implies that the community is integrating modern, sustainable trends to appeal to contemporary travelers.

The study further used two Focus group discussions with 7 individuals each to discuss the participation of Local Communities in tourism activities in Lake Manyara National Park. This group for discussion was composed of managers from tourism businesses, Village Executive Officers (VEO), heads of households in Kibaoni Manyara, owners of curio shops and tour guides. Below are their discussions

The participants emphasized the importance of inclusive decision-making processes that involve local communities in tourism activities. They argued that local communities possess invaluable knowledge about the area's culture, history, and environment. Therefore, incorporating their insights can lead to more authentic and sustainable tourism experiences for visitors. VEOs and heads of households suggested establishing community-based tourism initiatives that allow residents to directly benefit from tourism revenues. It was proposed that partnerships be established between tourism operators and local communities to develop and manage tourist attractions, with the profits being reinvested in community development projects. Tour guides and curio shop owners highlighted the need for capacity-building programs to enhance the skills of residents in hospitality, customer service, and entrepreneurship. It was believed that investing in training and education would empower local communities to actively participate in the tourism sector, thereby increasing their income and improving their quality of life. In conclusion, the participants concurred on the significance of fostering collaboration between stakeholders to promote local community involvement in tourism activities. They recommended implementing policies that prioritize the well-being of residents and ensure that tourism growth is sustainable and inclusive.

Socio-Economic Effects of Tourism on Local Communities

Table 4 presents the socio-economic effects of tourism on local communities surrounding Lake Manyara National Park.

Table 4:
Socio-Economic Effects of Tourism on Local Communities

Socio-Economic Effects	Frequency	Percent (%)
Creation of employment opportunities	80	96.3
Improvement of infrastructure (roads, water, healthcare)	74	88.9
Showcasing cultural heritage	57	69.1
Revenue-sharing schemes	69	82.7
Support for education initiatives	68	81.9
Support for healthcare initiatives	66	79.5
Support for small business development	65	78.3
Development of local crafts and souvenirs	50	60.2
Encouragement of local agriculture (organic vegetable production)	45	54.2
Expansion of local manufacturing (animal skin items)	40	48.2

Source: Field Data (2023)

The results show that tourism plays a huge role in economic and social aspects of community development. The most reported benefit (96.3%) was economic in nature, wherein tourism created income generation opportunities by creating employment. This is accompanied by an increase in support of small business development (78.3%), local crafts (60.2%), agriculture (54.2%), and small-scale manufacturing (48.2%), which indicates the growth of livelihood activities and income diversification of the local economy.

Socially, tourism leads to the need of better infrastructure (88.9%) and money-sharing schemes (82.7%), both of which make access to vital services easier. Investments in education (81.9%), and healthcare (79.5%) also reflect positive changes in human capital and community well-being. Also, the enhancement of cultural heritage (69.1%) indicates how tourism plays a part in enhancing cultural identity and social cohesion. In general, the findings indicate that tourism has widespread socio-economic impacts, but the comparatively small share of productive sectors, including agriculture and manufacturing reveals the fact of the lack of local economic integration.

Negative Effects of Tourism on Lake Manyara National Park

In this section, respondents were asked about the negative effects of tourism in Lake Manyara National Park on the local communities. Those indicating affirmative involvement were prompted to specify the negative effects of tourism in Lake Manyara National Park on the local communities.

Table 5: Negative Effects of Tourism in Lake Manyara National Park

	Response options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Response on Negative Effects	Yes	83	100
	No	0	0
Negative Effects of Tourism	Cultural Erosion	48	57.8
	Social Disruption	69	83.1
	Economic Dependence	53	63.9
	Environmental Degradation	72	86.7
	Land Displacement	60	72.3
	Pressure on Wildlife	75	90.4

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The assessment of tourism multiplier effects on local communities neighboring Lake Manyara National Park, as depicted in Table 5, with all respondents (100%) in Table 4.9, acknowledges the presence of negative impacts of tourism activities. The findings show that of respondents 57.9% cited cultural erosion as a negative effect of tourism, with increased commercialization and commodification leading to the loss or distortion of traditional practices and values. 83.1% of respondents showed that tourism inflow can disrupt the social fabric of local communities, resulting in conflicts over resource use, changes in social dynamics, and pressures on community infrastructure and services. Respondents 63.9% showed that depending on tourism as the primary source of income leaves local communities vulnerable to fluctuations in tourist arrivals, economic downturns, or changes in tourism trends.

These results are complemented by focus group discussion (FGD) as follows:

Tourism has truly been a blessing for our community in many ways. Thanks to the park, many of us now have jobs in hotels, lodges, and as tour guides. It's reduced unemployment and given our youth a reason to stay in the area instead of leaving in search of work. The roads, water supply, and other infrastructure have improved as well, and we've seen local artisans selling their crafts to tourists, which brings income directly to families. But, at the same time, I can't ignore the damage tourism has caused to our environment. Pollution, habitat destruction, and even the loss of wildlife are becoming real problems. And let's not forget the cultural clashes we're starting to lose our traditional values because we're adapting so much to please the tourists (Group 1).

The locals noted that they valued the economic gains that tourism has provided them, particularly in the form of employment in lodges, hotels and guiding services. These prospects have minimized unemployment and

motivated young people to remain in the region. Tourism was also linked to better infrastructure, including roads and water access. Nonetheless, members also expressed grave concerns regarding the environmental implications, such as pollution, habitat damage, and wildlife loss. The group also reported a change in local values as a culture, claiming that local traditions are being changed or watered down to fit tourist requirements, which is a threat to cultural preservation.

We have seen both good and bad sides. As a craft maker, the tourists are my biggest customers. My business has grown, and I can now support my family. But there's a downside. The cost of living has gone up because tourists are willing to pay more for goods and services. That leaves us locals struggling to afford necessities. There's this growing gap between those who benefit from tourism and those who don't it's creating inequality in our community (Group 2).

The group recognized the positive impact of tourism in enhancing small businesses, especially local artisans whose work is sought after by tourists. Higher income has boosted household welfare among others. But they also pointed out that tourism has increased the cost of living, making basic goods and services unaffordable to locals. The uneven distribution of tourism income led to increased disparity in economic status between those who directly enjoyed the benefits of tourism and those marginalized, causing societal inequality to increase as social stratification in the community.

Moreover, 86.7% of respondents agreed that unsustainable tourism practices, such as overdevelopment, habitat destruction, pollution, and wildlife disturbance, can degrade the natural environment and ecosystems upon which local communities depend for their livelihoods. Furthermore, 72.3% of respondents suggested that tourism development projects, such as hotels, resorts, or infrastructure expansion, may encroach upon or displace local communities from their ancestral lands.

To get more answers to, the researcher conducted FGD, Local Communities in the vicinity of Lake Manyara National Park benefit from tourism and discussed the Negative effects of tourism on the Local Communities adjacent to Lake Manyara National Park. Below are their discussions

Tourism has opened our eyes to the world. It has fostered cultural exchange and mutual understanding. We've learned so much about other people, and they've learned about us. Some of our young people have even started small businesses, diversifying our local economy. But I worry about our future. We're becoming too dependent on tourism. If anything were to happen to disrupt it, we'd all suffer. Also, our traditions are being distorted. We

sometimes feel pressured to put on performances or alter our customs just to entertain the visitors (Group 3).

Respondents acknowledged the positive aspects of cultural exchange and the role of tourism in opening minds, creating entrepreneurship, and diversifying the local economy. However, they raised an alarm regarding growing reliance on tourism as a primary means of livelihood. They cautioned that any interruption in tourist movement (like international crises) would greatly affect the local revenues. They were also under pressure to change the traditional practices to entertain tourists, which resulted in cultural identity distortion and a lack of authenticity in the long run.

I'm deeply concerned about the impact on our natural resources. The increased pressure from tourists has led to overexploitation too many vehicles, too many people, and too much waste. The park is beautiful, but how long can it sustain this? If we're not careful, we'll lose the very thing that attracts tourists here in the first place (Group 4).

These voices from the focus group discussions highlight the dual impact of tourism on local communities near Lake Manyara National Park. While it brings undeniable benefits, such as employment, infrastructure development, and cultural exchange, it also presents significant challenges, including environmental degradation, social inequalities, and cultural erosion.

The findings of the study explain that the erosion of cultural identity has diminished the authenticity and uniqueness of local culture, affecting community cohesion and heritage preservation efforts. Social Disruption has strained community relationships and led to tensions between residents and tourists, impacting the overall well-being of the community. Findings explain that economic dependence due to tourism activities hinders diversification efforts and limits the resilience of the community to external shocks, posing risks to long-term sustainability. However, other negative impacts include environmental degradation which threatens biodiversity, ecosystem services, and the overall health of the ecosystem, undermining the well-being of both residents and wildlife. Also land displacement, which can lead to the loss of access to resources, disruption of traditional livelihoods, and marginalization of Indigenous communities, exacerbating socio-economic disparities and inequities.

In addition to these benefits, there have been significant concerns expressed about the detrimental consequences of tourism on the environment and nearby populations. The fragile ecosystem of the national park is in danger

due to environmental degradation brought on by a rise in tourism, including pollution and habitat damage. Furthermore, there have been instances of cultural confrontations, the deterioration of traditional values, and an over-reliance on tourism as the main source of revenue due to the increase in tourists. To secure the long-term well-being of the local people surrounding Lake Manyara National Park, these difficulties underscore the necessity for sustainable tourism methods that strike a balance between financial gains, environmental protection and cultural preservation.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The results show that tourism has a very important role in the socio-economic organization of communities around Lake Manyara National Park where employment, small businesses, infrastructure, and human capital development all have extensive involvement. The demographic traits of the respondents, which are described as a mostly economically active population with a medium-high level of education, seems to ease the process of engaging in tourism-related activities and gaining the benefits associated with them. This substantiates the idea that demographic variables (education and age) affect tourist participation and access to tourism amenities (Mutana and Mukwada, 2021; Jovicic, 2022). The degree of tourism participation also indicates that tourism has been a key part of the local livelihoods instead of a secondary activity, which supports its contribution to socio-economic change among rural populations (Garcia and Blanco, 2023).

The results are broadly in line with the earlier research, which establish tourism as a contributor to local economic growth and diversification of livelihoods. The high role of tourism in job creation and income earned is in line with the paper by Garcia and Blanco (2023), and Liu et al. (2023), who add value to the idea of tourism, which enhances the livelihood of rural people. In a similar way, it is observed that the multiplier effects, as evidenced by developing small businesses, enhancing infrastructure, and provision of services, corroborates the findings of Chidakel et al. (2021), who show that tourism plays a significant role in household income and local development despite the existence of leakages. The findings also support Budovich (2023) who established a strong positive correlation between tourism and regional economic growth. Nevertheless, the research also reveals structural constraints aligned with Kessy et al. (2024), specifically, low sectoral connections and insufficient involvement of the local population in high-value tourism segments. This implies that as much as tourism has some quantifiable socio-economic impacts, its full potential has been limited by insufficient integration with other local economies.

Through these contributions, the results indicate some important socio-economic and environmental issues, such as unequal distribution of benefits, escalating living costs, environmental diminishment, and the mounting reliance on tourism as a major source of livelihood. These findings are consistent with the research findings in conservation sites where tourism may create positive and negative impacts at the same time when it is not managed appropriately (Kessy et al., 2025; Kideghesho et al., 2021). The local impacts are also notable since excessive reliance on tourism exposes the local communities to external shocks and reduces the probability of managing livelihoods in the long run. Policymaking-wise, the findings highlight the importance of inclusive tourism policies that reinforce the involvement of locals in tourism value-generating activities, skills training and development, as well as facilitating cross-linkages with other sectors like the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Moreover, the equitable benefit-sharing systems and sustainable resource management practices are needed to enable tourism to lead to long-term socio-economic development without compromising the sustainability of the environment (Liu et al., 2023; Melubo et al., 2024). The absence of the said interventions would mean that the development of tourism in the area of Lake Manyara would only serve to reinforce the already present inequalities and not to promote growth to be inclusive.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of the study was to evaluate the socio-economic impacts of tourism on local communities around Lake Manyara National Park. The results are that tourism is now a major force of local socio-economic operations, playing a major role in creating employment, building small business, enhancing infrastructure and making social services, including education and medical care, more accessible. These results affirm that the study objectives have been fulfilled in that definitive evidence has been provided regarding the impacts of tourism on the economic and social aspects of community livelihoods. The outcomes also however indicate that such benefits are also lopsided and clustered in particular sectors and that there is weaker connection to productive activities like agriculture and manufacturing. Moreover, the existence of adverse impacts such as environmental degradation, social unrest, and economic reliance show that tourism is a two-sided phenomenon in the area of the study.

This study thus concludes that although tourism has quantifiable socio-economic impacts, the multiplier impacts have not been achieved because of structural constraints on local economic integration and engagement.

This revelation fills a significant gap that is present in the literature in which tourism has been primarily measured in terms of aggregate returns without paying enough attention to localized distribution and sustainability issues. The study also fills the gaps in knowledge on how tourism effects work at the micro-level, especially within developing country contexts, by offering empirical evidence using a conservation-adjacent community. However, the study is confined by the fact that it is based on cross-sectional data and descriptive analysis, which does not allow to assert the causal relationships and long-term effects. Irrespective of these shortcomings, the research is adding to the more discriminating perspective of tourism as the developmental possibility, as well as the socio-economic vulnerability.

According to the data, the development of tourism in the Lake Manyara region needs specific interventions, including both the distribution of benefits and structural deficiency in the participation of local people. Emphasis should be placed on enhancing local economic connections by incorporating communities into the higher value segments of the tourism value chain, especially by supporting agriculture, local production, and supply systems related to tourism businesses. Capacity-building efforts must aim to develop skills that would allow communities to transition out of low-income activities into higher-end competitiveness in the sector. Moreover, the policy interventions should also respond to unequal distribution of benefits by implementing transparent and inclusive revenue sharing mechanisms, as well as enforcing environmental management practices to contain degradation and pressure on resources. Lastly, future studies must go beyond descriptive studies by using longitudinal and inferential methodology to better represent causal relationships and long-term socio-economic effects of tourism.

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