

Citizen Involvement in Decision Making Process in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam – Tanzania

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Abstract

This study was carried out to assess the effects of LGAs in promoting citizen involvement in decision making process in Ilala municipality. The objective of the study was to find out if there is citizen involvement in local government authorities. The study used a case study research design with a sample of 175 respondents selected through convenience and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected by using questionnaires and interviews. They were analyzed by using SPSS Version 21 and Microsoft Word for text processing. Findings revealed there was a policy or regulation which advocated citizen involvement but few employees and public servants were not aware of the policy. The public was involved in LGA meeting and activities more than three times. The way of involving the public was not constant. The public was involved satisfactorily in different activities other than financial. The study recommended that new employees be made aware of the policy/Transparency in financial transactions, that public servants are held, communication be improved, corruption be fought and that further studies be conducted.

Keywords: Citizen involvement; Decision making

Introduction

Citizen participation is narrated in literature as a key component in policy decision-making. This decision-making process to date is often driven by different stakeholders such as scientific experts, academic institutions; national and international governing bodies [1]. Participation in decision-making has a number of positive effects, including the adoption of advanced decisions, increased partnership, ownership and responsibility in the implementation of decisions, as well as increased confidence in public institutions [2]. Literature stresses that citizens' participation in the decision-making process is an important pillar of democracy [3,4]. Citizen participation in decision-making has attracted serious attention within the public administration research and practice [5]. The reason being the increasing dissatisfaction of citizens with the way central governments delivers services and hence necessitated local government authorities to be the primary service providers [6].

As the level of government closest to citizens, local government authorities (LGAs) are required to be explicit and transparent in terms of what they can and cannot, and will and will not do in response to community aspirations. LGAs must pay particular attention to, and invest meaningfully in, understanding and negotiating public value through engagement with citizens. It is imperative for LGAs to embrace some public values, which are inherently developed and expressed through electoral processes of representative democracy; non-political values can only be discovered by developing citizen capacity to explore public dimensions of these values through interaction and autonomous judgment that together makes participatory citizen participation [7,8].

Jasanoff assert that if LGAs manage effectively to engage collectively citizen in the decision-making process, it can offer an opportunity to

reflect on the blurring lines between social, political, and technology and economic context as technology advances at an unparalleled and unpoliced rate [9]. Indeed the process of engaging citizens, rather than seeking a panacea, offers an opportunity to articulate the critical citizen concerns in order for policy makers to design an anti-fragile system [10]. Johnson et al., state that citizen involvement in “decision making lies at the heart of managerial behaviour in all organizations” including local government authorities [11]. However, the lack of citizen involvement has been a root cause of failure in development programs in both rural and urban population [12].

Globally, Heinelt showed that many councilors in Europe have a positive attitude towards participation in local democracy [13]. England is an excellent example of the regulation and the implementation of consultation processes and other participatory tools at the local level [2]. Despite the good experience of most European countries, the experiences of South-Eastern European countries show insufficient cooperation among politicians, citizens and local administration to establish a legal framework in order to ensure participation in the policy-making process [14].

Unlike Europe, the Sub-Saharan Africa is underdeveloped region and most of their citizens are estimated to survive at below one US dollar a day to meet their daily needs. Endless poverty and corruption within African governments made most of citizens to start questioning constitutional powers of the central government authorities and putting emphasis on their involvement in decision-making to revitalize democracy, build citizenship and reinforce a sense of community [15].

In Tanzania, Chaligha, state that active participation in local governance is necessary for improving a citizen's quality of life [16]. Participation is manifested by the citizen's active role in governance structures (village/neighbourhood (mtaa) assembly meetings), active involvement in public service committees (water management

committees, school committees, etc.), and active involvement in preparing village/neighbourhood and ward plans.

Kabemela reveals that the interventions that the government has introduced since 1992 to improve governance at the national and grassroots level have not helped citizens to hold their village governments accountable [17]. This may be attributed to among other things legal provisions and regulations guiding the functioning of village government. Poor legal provisions and regulations of governance at the grassroots have hindered the ability of citizens to demand accountability from their village government. Local Government Authorities (LGAs) do not exist in a vacuum, they are product of legal framework that provide for their creation and existence. The Tanzania constitution provides for the creation of public authorities in Articles 145 and 146. Likewise, the Local Government (District Authorities) Act No. 7 of 1982 Act provides for the creation of local government, more specifically District Authorities. Furthermore, village governments are established under Act No. 7 of 1982. His findings further assert that prerequisites for an effective grassroots accountability regime have also hindered citizens holding their village government accountable. The ability of citizens to demand accountability depends on an awareness of their rights and responsibilities, participation in decision-making and access to information about the performance of their government from their leaders.

Despite the fact that the history of decentralization in Tanzania dates back to 1926 when the colonial government established LGAs and the system has gone through changes that reflect the changing national philosophy concerning the economic and social development of the country, still the purpose of this system is not properly addressed [18].

Mzenzi argues that the responsibilities and roles of LGAs across countries remain more or less similar; they are all charged with the responsibility of providing efficient public services and amenities to the local people through active involvement of the locals in decision-making process to maintain stability and their democratic jurisdiction, which give them legitimacy [19].

The survey of REPOA, in six selected local government authorities and Ilala Municipal Council inclusive suggests that active participation in local governance is necessary for improving a citizen's quality of life [20]. Participation is manifested by the citizen's active role in governance structures (village/neighbourhood (mtaa) assembly meetings), active involvement in public service committees (water management committees, school committees, etc.), and active involvement in preparing village/neighbourhood and ward plans. However, REPOA survey revealed that majority (83.9 per cent) in the 2013 Citizen Survey said they were not involved in preparing village/ward plans. Only 16.1 per cent said they were involved in preparing village/ward plans, of whom 5.9 percent were women, compared to 10.2 per cent men. Given the importance of such local level plans in the well-being of all the people in the locality, the low levels of citizen involvement stand as a challenge that need immediate solution which this study intends to address.

Citizen involvement in decision-making is among the political rights that Ilala citizens deserve to get. However, the situation is different because the municipality fails to provide such an important right due to poor implementation of decentralization policy as revealed by findings of Kwach et al., who pointed out that generally there is poor implementation of decentralization policies by the

municipal authority [21]. A part from that, the municipality the findings revealed by Charles, indicated that citizen involvement in Ilala municipality does not touch all basic issues that the community would like to get such as issues related to water. Hence, Based on that account, this study is deemed indispensable for examining the effects LGAs on citizen involvement in decision-making process in Ilala municipal council [22].

Material and Methods

Study area and target population

The study was carried out in Dar es Salaam region, Ilala Municipal Council covering four (4) departments which were purposively selected for investigation out of six departments with a total population of 338 employees (Ilala Municipal Council, (2017)). These six departments were administration and human resources, community development, agriculture and livestock, planning and economy, education and culture, and health.

Sampling procedure

Adam and Kamuzora, maintain that convenience or accidental sampling procedure involves selecting respondents primarily based on their availability and willingness to respond [23]. Thus, the researcher selected respondents from their respective strata on the basis of their readiness to provide data for the realisation of this work. Under this sampling technique, the researcher selected 175 respondents who were willing to cooperate with him whereby 120 respondents were given questionnaires and 55 respondents were purposively selected for Interviews.

Adam and Kamuzora, maintain that the decision with regard to which element or item should be included or excluded in the sample rests on the researcher's judgment and intuition. The researcher chooses randomly those elements that he sought could deliver the required data. Therefore, the major criterion for including an element in the sample is the possession of expertise or experience about the problem under investigation [23].

This sampling procedure used to randomly select twenty (20) respondents who were believed to be possessors of information on issues related to the contribution of LGAs in citizen involvement in decision-making process.

Sample size

This study considered employees of the municipal council as sampling units for assessing the effects of LGAs on citizen involvement in decision-making process in Ilala Municipal Council. Regarding sample size calculation, out of 338 employees of Ilala municipal council, 175 employees was obtained using R.V. Krejcie and D.W. Morgan, formula (Appendix IV attached), giving a total sample of 175 respondents (Table 1).

Out of all the questionnaires distributed, those that were equivalent to the target sample of 124 respondents from four selected departments were collected and accepted yielding 80% response rate as the returned questionnaires were only 100. The remained questionnaires were not returned due to several reasons; one being as some respondents lost more than twice the questionnaires so they withdrew from the study in the last minutes with an excuse of being forgetful. The second reason was many respondents considered this

study to be a part of political games so they deliberately agreed to participate and withdrew from the study without informing the researcher. Lastly, some respondents wanted to be paid so when the

researcher failed to pay them they refused to return the filled questionnaires (Table 2).

Departments	Total Number of Respondents	Respondents for Questionnaire	Respondents for FGD and Interviews	Percentage (%)
Health	43	31	12	25%
Education and culture	44	31	13	25%
Planning and economy	44	31	13	25%
community development	44	31	13	25%
Total	175	124	51	100%

Table 1: The distribution of respondents in the study.

Category of respondents (Households)	Distributed questionnaires	Percentage (%)	Returned questionnaires	Percentage (%)
Health	31	25%	27	22%
Education and culture	31	25%	26	21%
Planning and economy	31	25%	24	19%
community development	31	25%	23	19%
Total	124	100%	100	81%

Table 2: Response rate.

Data analysis

Analysis is referred as a procedure for bringing order to data, organizing content where there is no pattern and basic descriptive units. Data collected were both qualitative and quantitative. These data were initially cleaned, edited, coded and entered in a computer system called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 21) software before analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis was employed whereby cross-tabulations and frequency distributions to determine distribution of the respondents were presented in tables showing frequencies and percentages.

Results and Discussions

The data was analyzed according to the objective, which was: To find out if there is citizen involvement in local government authorities.

Statements	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	25	25.0
Disagree	12	12.0
Neutral	21	21.0
Agree	13	13.0
Strongly agree	29	29.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 3: The current regulation supports and encourages citizen involvement in decision making.

From Table 3 above, findings established that 29% of respondents strongly agreed, 23% of respondents agreed, 25% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12% of respondents disagreed, 21% of respondents were neutral, this implies that most of the respondents agreed on The current regulations supports and encourages citizen involvement in decision making.

Statements	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	18	18.0
Disagree	19	19.0
Neutral	17	17.0
Agree	30	30.0
Strongly agree	16	16.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 4: The municipality has clear policy on citizen involvement in decision-making.

From the Table 4 above, findings established that 30% of respondents w agreed, 16% of respondents strongly agreed, 19% of respondents disagree, 18% of respondents strongly disagree, therefore from the above table the researcher observed that most of the respondents agreed that the municipality has clear policy on citizen involvement in decision making.

Statements	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	30	30.0
Disagree	13	13.0
Neutral	8	8.0
Agree	17	17.0
Strongly Agree	32	32.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 5: There is regularity in conducting meetings by the municipality.

From the Table 5 above, findings established that 32% of respondents strongly agreed, 17% of respondents agreed, 30% of respondents strongly disagreed, 13% of respondents disagreed and 8% of respondents were neutral. Therefore, from the table above the researcher established that most of the respondents agreed that there is regularity in conducting meetings by the municipality.

Statements	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	37	37.0
Disagree	21	21.0
Neutral	8	8.0
Agree	19	19.0
Strongly agree	15	15.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 6: The meetings are responsive to the needs of the citizens because they are done in time.

From Table 6 above, findings established that 37% of respondents strongly disagreed, 21% of respondents disagreed, 15% of respondents strongly agreed, 19% of respondents agreed and 8% of respondents were neutral. This implies that most of the disagreed on the meetings are responsive to the needs of the citizens because they are done in time.

Items	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	21	21.0
Disagree	32	32.0
Neutral	17	17.0
Agree	16	16.0
Strongly agree	14	14.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 7: There is a district policy or regulations that advocate public involvement.

From the Table 7 above, findings established that 32% of respondents disagreed, 21% of respondents were strongly disagree, 17% of respondents were neutral, 16% of respondents were agreed, 14% of respondents were strongly agreed. This implies that most of the respondents were disagree that there is a district policy or regulations that advocate public involvement.

Items	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	26	26.0
Disagree	27	27.0
Neutral	17	17.0
Agree	16	16.0
Strongly agree	14	14.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 8: The public is being involved in accordance with the demand of the available municipal policy or regulations.

From the Table 8 above, Findings established that 27% of respondents disagree, 26% of respondents strongly disagreed, 17% of respondents were neutral, 16% of respondents were agreed, 14% of respondents strongly agreed, This implies that most of the respondents said that the public is not involved in accordance with the demand of the available municipal policy or regulations.

Items	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	25	25.0
Disagree	11	11.0
Neutral	20	20.0
Agree	36	36.0
Strongly Agree	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 9: The public is often involved in local government authority meeting or activity.

From Table 9 above, findings established that 36% of respondents agreed, 8% of respondents strongly agreed, 25% of respondents strongly disagreed, 11% of respondents disagreed and 20% of respondents were neutral. Therefore, the researcher observed that most of the respondents agreed that the public is involved in local government authority meeting or activity.

Statements	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	21	21.0
Disagree	21	21.0
Neutral	19	19.0
Agree	11	11.0
Strongly agree	28	28.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 10: The public is involved in Local Government Authority issues through the public itself.

From Table 10 above, findings established that 28% of respondents were strongly agreed, 11% of respondents were agreed, 21% of respondents were disagreed, 21% of respondents were strongly disagreed and 19% of respondents were neutral. This implies that 42% of respondents disagreed and 39% of respondents agreed on the involvement of the public in local government authority issues through public itself.

Statements	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	25	25.0
Disagree	12	12.0
Neutral	12	12.0
Agree	39	39.0
Strongly agree	12	12.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 11: The public is involved in Local Government Authority through the board.

From the Table 11 above, findings established that 39% of respondents agreed, 12% of respondents strongly agreed, 25% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12% of respondents disagreed, and 12% of respondents were neutral, therefore the researcher observed that most of respondents were agreed that the public is involved in Local Government Authority through the board.

Statements	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	33	33.0
Disagree	25	25.0
Neutral	11	11.0
Agree	13	13.0
Strongly agree	18	18.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 12: The public is involved in Local Government Authority through public servants only.

From the Table 12 above, findings established that 33% of respondents strongly disagreed, 25% of respondents disagreed, 18% of respondents strongly agreed, 13% of respondents were agreed and 11% of respondents were neutral, Therefore the researcher observed that most of the respondents disagreed that the public is involved in Local Government Authority through public servants only.

Statements	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	23	23.0
Disagree	22	22.0
Neutral	27	27.0
Agree	11	11.0
Strongly agree	17	17.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 13: The public is involved in Local Government Authority through other groups.

From the Table 13 above, findings established that 23% of respondents strongly disagreed, 22% of respondents disagreed, 17% of

respondents strongly agreed, 11% of respondents agreed and 27% of respondents were neutral, Therefore the researcher observed that most of the respondents disagreed followed with some who were neutral that public is involved in Local Government Authority through other groups.

Interview findings on citizen involvement in local government authorities

Respondents were asked whether they are involved in decision making in their respective local government.

Findings established that citizen involvement is not given a high priority because some knows nothing about the advantages of such an important activity. However, the involvement was seen to be there through meetings as a major means of this involvement in decision making. One respondent stated “involvement is option it is not a must that we get involved because we all have different opinions and ideas... how is that possible if we All share what we think is good for us?”

Another respondent said “we attend meetings like heal! It’s too much! I hate involvement! do you think we love talking in useless meetings? We attend because we just want to encourage our beloved leaders but we know our attendance is useless..” so this indicate that the public was involved in LGA meeting.

Conclusion

Based on the study findings the study concluded that;

- Citizen involvement in decision-making process was taking place at Ilala municipal council with deficiencies in areas of finance but also in areas of project activities monitoring and implementation. There were different channels of citizen involvement but which could not deliver all information needed by the people, such as financial reports or feedback to the public. There were also a number of challenges which hindered effective citizen involvement in issues concerning their development and the existing financial opacity.
- Lastly, the most urgent challenge for any government that claims to be democratic is to build a society motivated by participation. The requirements of democracy are met when the opportunities for citizen participation are present, irrespective of whether the citizen participates or not. As a result of these a number of recommendations have been put forward for action.

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