FACTORS INFLUENCING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN MITAA MEETINGS IN TANZANIA: EXPERIENCE FROM UBUNGO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

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2025

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certifies that he has read and hereby recommends for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania a dissertation titled ***Factors influencing citizen participation in Mitaa meetings in Tanzania: Experience from Ubungo Municipal Council***, in partial fulfillment of requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Governance and Leadership (MAGL).

……..……..…….

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……..…….

Signature

……..

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved wife Utele Uzima for her invaluable support, encouragement and patience throughout my graduate studies.

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First and foremost, I thank Almighty God for abundant health, a sound mind, empowerment, and protection to this end. In this same regard, I appreciate the divine guidance and leadership from my spiritual parents, Rev. Dr. Robert Israel and Snr. Pst. Christine Mbelwa.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to explore the factors influencing citizen participation in Mitaa meetings in Ubungo Municipal Council, Tanzania. The specific objectives of the study were to examine citizens' perceptions of Mitaa meetings, shed light on the reasons behind low citizen participation, and identify efforts in place to improve citizen participation in Mitaa meetings. The study was informed and guided by the theory A Ladder of Citizen Participation, proposed by Sherry Phyllis Arnstein in 1969. Among other insights, this theory outlines eight levels of citizen participation and highlights the challenges citizens face in achieving meaningful involvement in public affairs that affect them.

This was a qualitative study, with data collected from 70 respondents through document reviews and in-depth, face-to-face interviews conducted in 5 out of 14 wards and 10 out of 90 Mitaa in Ubungo Municipal Council. The findings indicated that Mitaa meetings are important organs for the democratic participation of citizens in decision-making; therefore, citizens support their continuation within Tanzania's local government system. However, while they endorse the meetings, citizens also highlighted areas needing improvement for greater effectiveness. The study identified several reasons for low citizen participation in Mitaa meetings, categorized primarily into two groups: factors related to citizens and those related to Mtaa leadership. These reasons include citizens prioritizing personal interests over community interests, low levels of civic education, irresponsibility among Mtaa leaders, a lack of capacity to influence citizens, exclusion of citizens from agenda formulation, poor transparency and accountability, and the limited powers and authority of Mitaa meetings.

On the other hand, the study also identified several efforts currently in place to enhance citizen participation, such as using social media, arts and entertainment, sending bulk SMS messages, dividing Mitaa into smaller segments (zones), engaging influential leaders at the household level, and utilizing religious networks. However, these efforts have not yet yielded the expected results.

Given the unsatisfactory outcomes of the efforts applied, the study recommends amending the Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act, Chapter 288, to grant more powers to Mitaa meetings; allocating budgets for the organization of Mitaa meetings; building the capacity of Mtaa leaders; and formally recognizing Mtaa leaders as public servants.

Keywords: *Local government, Citizen participation, Citizen perception, Mitaa meetings, Decision-making.*

TABLE OF CONTENT

CERTIFICATION ..... **i**

COPYRIGHT ..... **ii**

DECLARATION ..... **iii**

DEDICATION ..... **iv**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ..... **v**

ABSTRACT ..... **vi**

TABLE OF CONTENT ..... **vii**

LIST OF FIGURES ..... **xiv**

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS ..... **xv**

CHAPTER ONE **1**

INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1 Background to the Problem 1

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem 6

1.3 Research Objectives 7

1.3.1 General Objective 7

1.3.2 Specific Objectives: - 7

1.4 Research Questions 7

1.5 Significance of the Study 7

1.6 Delimitation of the Study 8

1.7 Limitations of the Study 8

1.8 Chapter Summary 9

CHAPTER TWO 11

LITERATURE REVIEW 11

2.1 Overview 11

2.2 Conceptual Definitions 11

2.2.1 Local Governments 11

2.2.2 Mtaa 12

2.2.3 Mitaa Meetings 12

2.2.4 Participation 13

2.2.5 Decision-making 14

2.3 Theoretical Review 14

2.4 Empirical Analysis of Relevant Studies 17

2.4.1 General Studies 17

2.4.2 Studies in African countries 18

2.4.3 Empirical Studies in Tanzania 20

2.5 Research Gap Identified 21

2.6 Chapter Summary 21

CHAPTER THREE 23

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 23

3.1 Overview 23

3.2 Research Approach 23

3.3 Study Population 25

3.4 Study Area 27

3.5 Sampling 28

3.6 Variables of the Study 28

3.7 Methods of Data Collection 29

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis 29

3.9 Validity and Reliability 30

3.10 Ethical Considerations 31

3.11 Chapter Summary 31

CHAPTER FOUR 33

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 33

4.1 Overview 33

4.2 Response Rate 33

4.3 Study Coverage in Ubungo Municipal Council 34

4.4 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents 35

4.5 Citizen Perception of Mitaa Meetings 37

4.6 Citizen Participation in Mitaa Meetings 38

4.7 Sex and Age in Relation to Participation in Mitaa meetings 40

4.8 Reasons for Low Citizen Participation in Mitaa Meetings 40

4.8.1 Commitment to Personal Engagements over Community Priorities 41

4.8.2 Minimal Opportunity for Citizen Participation in Agenda Formulation 41

4.8.3 Upholding Party Interests during the Conduct of Mitaa Meetings 42

4.8.4 Unpredictable Schedules for Mitaa Meetings 42

4.8.5 No Direct Personal Benefits Associated with Mitaa Meetings 43

4.8.6 Reliance on Problems facing Respective Mitaa 44

4.8.7 LowLegitimacy of Mtaa Leaders among Citizens 44

4.8.8 Inconclusive Decisions in Mitaa Meetings 45

4.8.9 Low Civic Education among Citizens 45

4.8.10 Lack of Financial Resources for Organization of Mitaa meetings 46

4.8.11 Volunteering Mtaa Leaders 46

4.8.12 Ambulant Residents 47

4.8.13 Secrecy and Unaccountability of Mitaa Leaders 47

4.8.14 Lack of Information about Mitaa Meetings 48

4.9 Efforts in place for improving citizen participation in Mitaa Meetings 48

4.9.1 Using Social Media Applications and Networks 48

4.9.2 Using Influential, Respected and Grassroot Party Leaders 49

4.9.3 Employing Religious Structures 50

4.9.4 Arts and Entertainment 50

4.9.5 Creation of Meeting Zones within the Respective Mitaa 51

4.9.6 Bulk SMS 51

4.9.7 Invitation of Influential Leaders 52

4.10 Chapter Summary 52

CHAPTER FIVE 54

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 54

5.1 Overview 54

5.2 Summary of the Study Findings 54

5.3 Conclusions 55

5.4 Recommendations 55

5.4.1 Recommendations to the President's Office - Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) 56

5.4.2 Recommendations to the Ministry of Finance 58

5.4.3 Recommendations to the President's Office-Public Service Management and Good Governance (PO-PSM&GG) 59

5.4.4 Recommendations to Local Government Authorities (LGAs) 60

5.4.5 Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) 61

5.4.6 Recommendations to Political Parties 62

5.5 Proposed Areas for Further Study 64

5.6 Chapter Summary 65

REFERENCES 68

APPENDIXES 73

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Declining Trend of Citizen Participation in Local Governance Affairs at Lower Levels in Tanzania 5

Table 3.1: Analysis of the Study Population 26

Table 3.2: Population of the Newest Municipalities in Tanzania 27

Table 4.1: Categories of Respondents in the Study 34

Table 4.2: Demographic Characteristics of the Study Respondents 36

Table 4.3: Citizen Perception of Mitaa Meetings 38

Table 4.4: Number of Citizens versus Attendance in Mitaa Meetings 39

Table 4.5: Legal Requirements for Convening Mitaa Meetings versus Current Practices 43

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Illustration of Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation 16

Figure 4.1: Study Coverage in Percentage in Ubungo Municipal Council..... 35

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CBOs	Community-Based Organisations
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
D by D	Decentralization by Devolution Policy
DAs	District Authorities
EU	European Union
LGAs	Local Government Authorities
LGRP	Local Government Reform Programme
MEO	Mtaa Executive Officer
OUT	The Open University of Tanzania
PO-RALG	President's Office- Regional Administration and Local Government
REPOA	Report on Poverty Alleviation
RLGSP	Regional and Local Government Strengthening Programme
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TPI	The Partnership Initiative

UAs	Urban Authorities
UMC	Ubungo Municipal Council
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
WEO	Ward Executive Officer

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Problem

There is a universal acknowledgement and appreciation of the place and invaluable contribution of citizen participation in decision-making processes. Citizen participation is considered as a major ingredient of a democratic society and a key factor for achieving and sustaining socio-economic development in any community and nation (AU, 2014; & Council of Europe, 1985).

The global promise of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is leaving no one behind, urging governments, civil society organizations, private sectors and development stakeholders to uphold partnership in addressing the 21st century global challenges. These challenges include poverty in all its forms, marginalization, inequalities and discrimination for realization of inclusive and sustainable development. Ensuring that no one is left behind in the development process requires the promotion of citizen participation in decision-making, particularly at the grassroots level (UN, 2017). This approach ensures that development policies, plans, strategies, and projects reflect the voices, genuine needs, and priorities of the people. UNDESA and TPI (2020) propose partnership as the new norm for the 21st century, emphasizing that all countries, governments, societies, and development stakeholders must prioritize collaboration to achieve sustainable development goals at all levels, including fostering citizen participation at the community level.

Both the European Charter of Local Self-Government, adopted in Strasbourg, France, on 15 October 1985, and the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development, adopted in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, on 27 June 2014, underscore the importance of local governments as the administrative units closest to the people. These vital documents collectively affirm that local governments are essential to fostering democratic governance, promoting active citizen participation in decision-making process at grassroots, and ensuring the effective delivery of public services. By recognizing the significant role of local government authorities, both charters provide a standardizing framework that guides member states in promoting and strengthening local governments as forums for accommodating citizen participation and community needs (Council of Europe, 1985; African Union, 2014).

Following the recognition of the invaluable contribution of local governments as the foundations of democracy, facilitators of citizen participation in decision-making at lower levels and social service delivery, different countries have incorporated local governments in their legal frameworks including the national constitutions. The Constitution of the Republic of Costa Rica of 1949 (Articles 168-175), the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 (Articles 151-164), the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana of 1992 (Articles 240-256), the Constitution of the Republic of Kenya of 2010 (Articles 174-200) and the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 (Articles 8, 145, and 146) are such cases in point. Steytler (2023), Ayele (2022), Kpentey (2019), Walker and Andrews (2015) and Kessy (2011) are all in

agreement on the pivotal role and immeasurable importance of local governments for a functioning and better local governance in any democratic country. They all concur that local governments are responsible for provision of basic public services needed by local communities and execution of delegated functions on behalf of the federal or national government. They also claim that local governments are closest to the people and the foundation of democracy at lower levels. Therefore, they are expected to provide spaces for democratic participation of citizens into decision making that affect their lives. Because local governments have legally designated platforms which bring together the locally elected leaders and citizens; local leaders get an opportunity to share their performance reports given responsibilities conferred to them and citizens on the other hand hold their leaders accountable for the outcomes of their actions and decisions. It is enough to say local governments are the lifeblood of any democratic state.

Arnstein (1969) argues the "idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you. Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy—a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone." Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (1974) in his book Man and Development holds that if real development is to take place, the people have to be involved. In one of his famous quotes regarding the principle of people-centred development, Mwalimu Nyerere says "people cannot be developed but they can develop by themselves*"* (URT, 2019:1). This means people must participate in decision-making concerning development as the main actors and primary beneficiaries of the development outcomes. In Tanzania, local government authorities have a long history of

establishment, development and reforms. They have existed for the past 14 decades prior to colonialism in 1880s to date (URT, 2016). The powers and functions of local governments in Tanzania especially on citizen participation has been defined in URT (1977; 1982; 1998; 2016; 2017; 2019; 2019; & 2022). The guiding documents on local governments state categorically that the role of local governments which is to "facilitate participation of the people in deciding on matters affecting their lives, planning and executing their development programmes; and foster partnership with civic groups". For this role to happen, local governments must be transparent and accountable to the local people. In this context, local governments are expected to be the facilitators of citizen participation in decision making at grassroots (URT, 1998:4).

For citizen participation to be realized in Tanzania, Legislations and regulations have established spaces for citizen participation referred at grassroots referred to as community-level gatherings named Mitaa meetings (URT 1982; & 2019). These meetings are permanent, compulsory, and they must be held regularly at least once in every 2 months. They must be publicly announced to all residents, conducted in accessible public areas to allow free, open and democratic participation of all adult citizens/residents residing in the respective Mtaa. Besides, the regulations discloses that if the Chairperson of the Mtaa Committee will not hold three Meetings consecutively, he/she will be legally removed from office and by-election will be conducted to fill his/her position. This shows how the legal frameworks have prioritized citizen participation into decision-making process at grassroots. Besides, several literatures have established the importance of citizen participation into decision-making process for

policy implications and attainment of socio-economic development (Mubita, Libati & Mulonda, 2017; Chaligha, 2014; URT, 2022). Despite several interventions carried out, policy and legal reforms geared towards promoting citizen participation in decision-making process, the outcomes are below satisfaction. The existing literature unveils that citizen participation indecision-making process at lower levels is declining instead of improving as expected (URT, 2022; URT 2019; Mulikuza, Buhori, & Kowa, 2019; Chaligha, 2014). URT, 2022 discloses that there is "low involvement and turn-up of the people at lower-level government (LLG) of Villages, Mitaa and Vitongoji in socio-economic activities and that deprives them from ownership in managing and safeguarding public assets". URT, 2019 reveals that "the government aspirations to realise bottom-up planning and budgeting with maximum community participation failed".

Table 1.1: Declining Trend of Citizen Participation in Local Governance Affairs at Lower Levels in Tanzania

S/N	Category	Year 2006	Year 2013
1.	Village and Ward Leadership	23%	22.3%
2.	Council Meetings	28%	22%
3.	School Committees	36%	15%
4.	Water Committees	23%	9.5%
5.	Village Planning	35%	16.1%
6.	Public Works Project Committee	19%	9.7%
7.	TASAF Project Committee	14%	6.3%

Source: Chaligha (2014)

Low-citizen participation in decision making process have detrimental outcomes on realization of socio-economic development. This is because when citizens are left out of decision-making process; public policies, plans, strategies and budgets become unrealistic as a result they will not address real issues facing citizens. Moreover, lack of citizen participation arouses mistrust between citizens and government (Ebdon& Franklin, 2004).

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Studies on citizen participation in decision-making processes at lower-level government (LLG) within Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Tanzania broadly agree that citizen participation remains low, particularly in grassroots decision-making platforms—community-based meetings in both rural and urban settings (URT, 2022; Mulikuza, Buhori, & Kowa, 2019; Chaligha, 2014). These studies agree that low citizen participation is detrimental to effective local governance, contrary to the principles of a democratic society, and undermines the attainment of community development aspirations. Although these works acknowledge the existence of low participation at lower levels of local government, they largely remain silent on why citizens are reluctant or unwilling to participate in these decision-making forums, particularly Mitaa meetings. The lack of clear underlying factors influencing citizen participation in these local platforms represents a critical gap in the literature. Given the limited understanding of what motivates or hinders citizen participation in Mitaa meetings, particularly in Ubungo Municipality, it is deemed necessary to conduct a study to generate data-supported evidences on this important topic.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

The main objective of the study was to explore the factors influencing citizen participation in Mitaa meetings in Ubungo Municipal Council.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives: -

i. To examine perceptions of Mitaa meetings among citizens in Ubungo Municipal Council.

ii. To bring to light the reasons behind low citizen participation in Mitaa meetings in Ubungo Municipal Council.

iii. To identify efforts in place for improving citizen participation in Mitaa meetings in Ubungo Municipal Council.

1.4 Research Questions

i. How do citizens in Ubungo Municipality perceive Mitaa meetings?

ii. What are the reasons behind low citizen participation in Mitaa meetings in Ubungo Municipal Council?

iii. What are the efforts in place for improving citizen participation in Mitaa Meetings in Ubungo Municipal Council?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is in line with the global, regional, national and local development initiatives which prioritize citizen participation in decision-making process. It is well-

acknowledged that development policies, plans, strategies and programmes cannot be realized and sustained without taking citizens on board. Therefore, this study is likely to be helpful to the government, local government authorities, policy makers, decision makers, development partners, civil society organisations, private sectors and citizens because they are interested to understand the reasons behind low citizen participation in Mitaa meetings. Knowing the root causes of low citizen participation may inform the correct interventions and aid policy and legal reforms.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

The study relied on qualitative design because it sought to understand factors affecting citizen participation into Mitaa meetings in Ubungo Municipal Council. It employed document analysis and in-depth face to face interview techniques in data collection. The study was conducted in 5 out of 14 Wards and 10 out of 90 Mitaa in Ubungo Municipal Council.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Studies are often influenced by various factors, including unfavorable weather conditions, political instability, budgetary constraints, researcher limitations, and socio-political contexts. This study was conducted in July 2024, the year that local government election is held in all Mitaa, Vitongoji, and Villages in Tanzania. Although preparations for the 2024 local government election were underway, they did not affect the data collection process because accessing permit and support from the Municipal authority, clarity of the purpose of the study and adherence to ethical standards. Respondents were

positive, open, and willing to share their views, opinions, and suggestions regarding citizen participation in Mitaa meetings in the Ubungo Municipal Council.

1.8 Chapter Summary

Chapter One establishes the context and rationale for the study topic. It employs a funnel-shaped structure, beginning with global perspectives on participatory governance and narrowing down through regional, national, and finally local contexts. The chapter highlights the recognized importance of citizen participation in local governance as a democratic right and a prerequisite for accountable, inclusive, and effective development. The statement of the problem identifies a critical gap in the existing literatures. Studies cited affirm that citizen participation at the grassroots level in Tanzania is generally low, particularly in Mitaa meetings, but they do not adequately explain why citizens are disengaged. The absence of empirical insight into the underlying causes of low participation, despite having legal provisions that guarantee participation represents a significant knowledge deficit, which the study sought to address. The chapter articulates the general and specific research objectives, which focus on examining citizen perceptions, uncovering reasons behind low participation, and identifying current efforts aimed at enhancing participation in Mitaa meetings. Corresponding research questions are presented to guide the inquiry. The significance of the study is discussed in light of its potential to inform policy reforms, improve participatory mechanisms, and support broader governance and development agendas. The delimitation section outlines the study's qualitative design and its focus on selected 5 Wards and 10 Mitaa within Ubungo Municipal Council. The limitations are

acknowledged, particularly the timing of the study conducted during preparations for 2024 local elections in Tanzania, though successful data collection was achieved through ethical compliance and institutional support.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter reviews the existing literature related to the focus of the study. It discusses the conceptual definitions, theoretical review, empirical analysis of relevant studies, and identification of the research gap.

2.2 Conceptual Definitions

Delimiting key concepts is a fundamental step in any research work, as it ensures conceptual clarity and mitigates potential ambiguities or misinterpretations. This section critically examines various scholarly and institutional definitions of central terms relevant to this study namely local governments, mitaa, mitaa meetings, participation, and decision-making. The study establishes context-appropriate operational definitions that guide the analysis and interpretation of findings, thereby enhancing academic consistency of the research.

2.2.1 Local Governments

Local governments have been defined by several authors in terms of their relationship with the national or federal government, their level of autonomy compared with the central or federal government, how they are formed, geographical demarcation, proximity to the citizens and the core functions they perform. Steytler (2023), URT (1977), URT (2016) and Walker and Andrews (2015) recognize local governments as sub-national, semi-autonomous governments, closest to the people and responsible for

provision of basic public services to the people in a demarcated geographical area. Local governments are established at provinces, regions, counties, districts, urban centres, wards, villages and neighborhoods. They are recognized with different names such as cities, municipalities, councils, township authorities, assemblies, and communes.

In this study, local governments are referred to as lower-level government structures which serve the needs of the local communities. Given their place and role, local governments are expected to establish, facilitate and keep spaces for close interaction with the people at lower levels. In Tanzania, the lowest structures of local governments in Urban settings are known as Mitaa which accommodate people residing in specified Mitaa.

2.2.2 Mtaa

Mtaa is an administrative division of a Ward in urban authorities (URT, 1982). It is the lowest administrative unit in urban authorities in Tanzania. Wards are divided into several Mitaas in urban setting, while in rural setting, Wards are divided into several Villages. Tanzania has a total of 3,956 Wards, 4000 Mitaas in urban areas and 12, 318 Villages in rural areas (URT, 2022). This study will concentrate on 5 Wards out of 14 and 10 out of 91 Mitaas in Ubungo Municipal Council.

2.2.3 Mitaa Meetings

Mitaa is a Swahili plural for Mtaa. Mitaa meetings are gatherings held at least once in every two months at all Mitaa in urban areas (URT, 1982; & URT, 2019).

This study regards Mitaa meetings as important forums at lower level which provide an opportunity for people to meet and discuss issues that affect their lives.

These meetings are participated by all adult results of the respective Mitaa. Through these meetings, citizens exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities of participating in planning, implementation and assessment of development programmes as well as holding their leaders accountable.

2.2.4 Participation

This concept is defined as empowering people to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors, rather than passive subjects, manage the resources, make decisions, and control the activities that affect their lives. (Duraiappah, Roddy& Parry, 2005). Arnstein claims that citizen participation is citizen power; and for participation to happen there must be authentic redistribution of power among citizens for decision-making (Arnstein, 1969). Arnstein considers citizen participation in public affairs as a cornerstone of democracy. In this study, participation means considering the views, opinions, suggestions and perceptions of the local communities in public decision-making. This will only happen when people at lower level are given an open, free and equal opportunity to make decisions on matters which affect their lives.

It embraces principles such as equality, freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of assembly. In order for participation to happen at lower levels in Tanzania, there are local platforms known as Mitaa meetings housed in

local governments which facilitate the regular meetings among citizens for discussing issues which affect their lives.

2.2.5 Decision-making

Decision making is the process whereby an individual, group or organization reaches conclusions about what future actions to pursue given a set of objectives and limits on available resources. This process will be often iterative, involving issue-framing, intelligence-gathering, coming to conclusions and learning from experience (Russo & Paul, 2014). This study considers decision-making as a process which invoices making choices, reaching conclusions or taking actions via regular Mitaa meetings. It does not only mean using Mitaa meetings to legitimize decisions but using Mitaa meetings for reaching decisions with people's voices. The process starts from agenda formulation, open discussions, and end up with reaching conclusions. Among the common decisions made by citizens during Mitaa meetings include initiation of development projects, having priorities, revoking the previous decisions, leadership selection such as a committee for undertaking a specific role, and resource mobilization. For example, citizens via Mitaa meetings may decide to build two classrooms at their community school within eight months through their material and financial contributions.

2.3 Theoretical Review

Theories or models establish causation and show relationships between variables. They also help in understanding patterns, trends of events or actions and their outcomes. Following the vital role of theories/models in analysing patterns and trends among

variables, the study was anchored on a theory called a “Ladder of Citizen Participation” developed by Sherry Phyllis Arnstein in 1969. Arnstein was employed as a chief advisor on citizen participation in Model Cities Program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in New York, US.

She worked as a chief advisor from 1967 to 1968 and in 1969 she published her famous article titled “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” in the Journal of the American Institute of Planners (now the Journal of the American Planning Association). This article was much influenced by her experience while working in Model Cities Program. (Arnstein, 1969; Gaber, 2019). Arnstein was employed in Model Cities Program when there was pressure from citizens who wanted their rights of participation in decision-making to be recognized and granted. Despites pressures from citizens, the Program did not have approaches for citizen participation; therefore Arnstein was expected to propose the best approach. She found that public institutions and government officials deny power to citizens, that is why she proposed the redistribution of power to aiding citizens to engage in decision-making. Arnstein holds that there is no participation without redistribution of power.

Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation is presented in a ladder with eight rungs ranked from bottom rung, which means citizens have no power for decision-making to the top rung meaning citizens have actual citizen power to decide. Each rung represents a different level of citizen participation. The eight levels are manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power and citizen control.

These eight levels of participation are grouped into three categories namely non-participation which means citizens have no power, degrees of tokenism which means citizens are given counterfeit power, and degrees of citizen power which means citizens have actual power for decision-making.

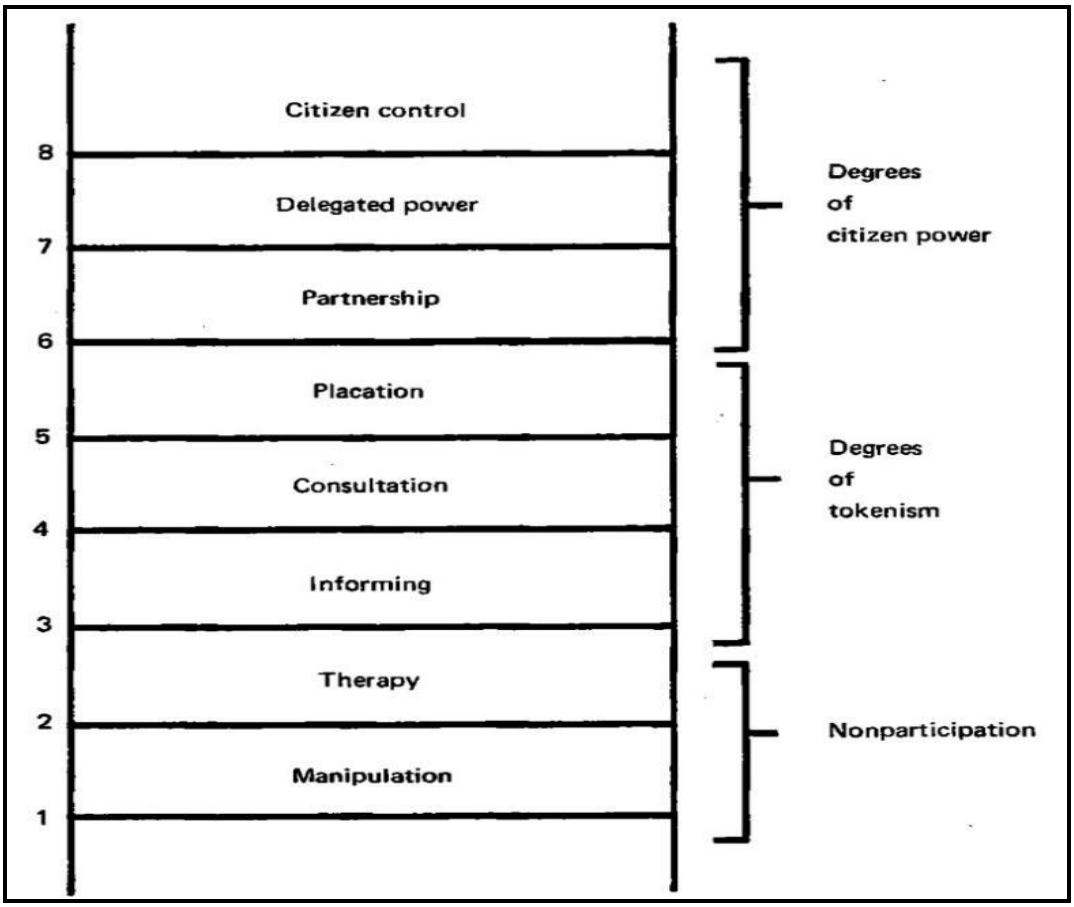


Figure 2.1: Illustration of Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

Source: Arnstein (1969)

Despite being the oldest theory (Arnstein, 1969), it is still relevant as it explains the relationship between government officials and citizens as far as decision-making process

is concerned. In many cases, government officials are powerholders while citizens are powerless. As a result, most public decisions are made by government officials and citizens are treated as subjects or beneficiaries of those public services. The theory unveils low citizen participation as a policy concern supported by public institutions. For example, local governments are public structures expected to support citizen participation, however they end up denying power to citizens. This theory has some limitations including failure to describe explicitly how citizen participation can move from one level to another for example from manipulation to citizen control. The theory also assumes that when the pinnacle is attained which is citizen control, it will be maintained. However, citizen participation has undergone constant change, alternating between periods of low and high engagement.

2.4 Empirical Analysis of Relevant Studies

2.4.1 General Studies

Arnstein's theory of Ladder of Citizen Participation developed in 1969discusses that citizen participation is a long concern between the powerholders and the powerless. It is a long power struggle between the two opposing parties as the powerless are demanding to participate into public decision-making which affect them while the powerholders are denying their participation.

Arnstein claims that citizen participation has been challenging because both the public institutions and public officials have a tendency of denying people's rights of participation into decision-making.

The public institutions do not have spaces and approaches to accommodate citizen participation. She supported her arguments by drawing evidences of lack of citizen participatory approaches in Model Cities Program in US while was serving as an advisor of citizen participation in the Program. The theory recommends for wider and modern approaches for citizen participation into decision-making process. Many literatures on citizen participation are in total agreement that local governments are as important as central/national/federal governments. Besides, local governments are cornerstones of democracy at grassroots as they facilitate democratic and effective citizen participation into decision-making process on issues which affect their lives. Therefore, when the local governments are well-functioning, they will directly result into improved service delivery at grassroots and improved citizen participation into decision-making and the viceversa. (Walker& Andrews, 2015; Steytler, 2023)

2.4.2 Studies in African countries

Ayele (2022) appreciates the importance of local governments in Ethiopia as they are closest to the people at the grassroots and charged with responsibility of delivering essential public services to the people. Despite their essential role, Ayele discusses that local governments in Ethiopia are facing several problems including lack of clear legal recognition and mandate in the national constitution, being undemocratic and low citizen participation in decision-making process especially on local elections. Ayele further discloses that local governments in Ethiopia have weak structures and they treated as unworthy.

This study suggests that there is high need for establishing the functioning local government structures for promoting and sustaining citizen participation into decision-making on matters which affect their lives. This study gives a general picture that local governments are worthwhile as they provide basic public services to people at lower levels and they act as platforms for citizen participation into decision-making at grassroots. It also appeals for decision-makers and development stakeholders to improve local governments for effective discharging of its functions. Another study by Mubita, Libati, & Mulonda (2017) underscores the importance of citizen participation indecision-making process from planning stage to implementation of development projects. Citizen involvement in designing and implementation of projects guarantees indigenous knowledge, real needs, people's responsiveness, local solutions, resources, relevance of the interventions, breaking dependency mentality and sustainability of development projects.

Furthermore, a study by Kpentey (2019) establishes a connection between local government and citizen participation. Kpentey argues that local government is the foundation stone for democracy at lower levels. She also claims that citizen participation is an important ingredient of good local governance.

Although effective citizen participation can't be reflected in a weak local government system with dependency to the central government in terms of financial, material and human resources. Given the challenges facing local governments, she recommends for a

policy and legal reforms of local governments in order to allow local autonomy, more citizen participation, accountability, decentralization and local resource mobilization.

This study builds on a proposed study as it shows a direct relationship between local government and citizen participation as well as structural and legal constraints of citizen participation in local governments.

2.4.3 Empirical Studies in Tanzania

Several studies have been conducted in Tanzania to examine the level of citizen participation into decision-making especially at the lower levels of local government authorities. Among those studies include Chaligha (2014) and Mulikuza, Buhori and Kowa (2019).

Chaligha (2014) conducted a survey to assess whether citizen participation is improving or diminishing from year from 2003 to 2013 at grassroots. The survey covered six local government authorities located in both urban and rural areas. The urban authorities involved in the survey were Mwanza City Council (MCC), Ilala Municipal Council (IMC, which is now Dar City Council) while the district authorities were Bagamoyo District Council (BDC), Iringa District Council (IDC), Kilosa District Council (KDC), Moshi District Council (MDC). In this survey, Chaligha found that citizen participation is diminishing.

This study establishes the presence of low citizen participation and builds the foundation on this study on reasons for low citizen participation. Mulikuza, Buhori, and Kowa

(2019) carried out a study in Kibaha District Council in Coast Region to examine citizen involvement in budget process as per citizen rights and duties stipulated in the Constitution of Tanzania, legislations related with local governments in Tanzania, Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (O&OD) and budget guidelines.

They found that there was poor citizen participation in budget process. Among the grounds for low participation were the participatory planning tool known as O&OD was not fully implemented and local leaders were not aware about it, low awareness among citizens on budget process and local leaders monopolized the budget process. This study underpins that there is problem of low citizen participation in decision making especially on budget process at lower levels. Having known the situation in Kibaha, this study arouses interest for understanding the situation in Ubungo Municipal Council.

2.5 Research Gap Identified

Many studies have established the problem of low citizen participation in decision-making process particularly in lower levels of local government authorities (LGAs) in Tanzania. However, little is known about perceptions and reasons for low citizen participation in Mitaa meetings in Ubungo Municipal Council.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literatures underpinning the study topic. The chapter began by clarifying key conceptual definitions critical to the research, including local governments, Mtaa, Mitaa meetings, participation, and decision-making. These definitions have established a shared

understanding of the terminology used throughout the study and provided the basis for subsequent analysis. The theoretical review has presented relevant frameworks that guide the investigation, with particular emphasis on participation theories that explain citizen engagement in local governance. This section has laid the conceptual foundation necessary for interpreting empirical findings. The chapter has then critically examined empirical studies related to citizen participation at various levels. It has first reviewed general global studies on participation and governance, before narrowing the focus to research conducted in African countries. Moreover, the discussion has highlighted Tanzanian empirical work, identifying common themes, methodological approaches, and findings relevant to local-level participation in governance forums such as Mitaa meetings. Furthermore, the chapter has identified significant research gaps, notably the lack of in-depth understanding regarding the specific factors that influence citizen participation in Mitaa meetings within the Tanzanian context. This gap underscores the necessity and relevance of the current study. The chapter concludes with a summary that synthesizes the reviewed literature, reinforcing the theoretical and empirical foundation upon which the study is built and justifying the focus of the research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the essential components of research methodology which include research strategies, survey population, area of the research or survey, sampling design and procedures, variables and measurement procedures, methods of data collection, data processing and analysis, expected results of the study, research activities or schedule, workplan, estimated research budget, and expected time of commencing and completing the study.

3.2 Research Approach

Given the nature of the research objectives, questions, and the phenomenon under study, a qualitative approach was adopted. The rationale for choosing a qualitative approach in this study was manifold. First, the qualitative approach is valuable for gaining an in-depth understanding of phenomena, specifically in terms of perceptions, experiences, and reasons (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study aimed to explore factors influencing citizen participation in Mitaa meetings, focusing on citizen perceptions of these meetings and reasons for low participation, making this approach particularly suitable for this study.

Second, the qualitative approach is also relevant when the researcher seeks to examine phenomena that are challenging to quantify (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this case, the researcher was interested in understanding citizen perceptions of Mitaa meetings. Since

perceptions cannot be easily expressed in numerical terms, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice. Third, this approach is ideal for capturing personal experiences, lived realities, and subjective perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The study's focus was to gather respondents' experiences regarding low citizen participation in Mitaa meetings and the reasons for this issue. Therefore, the qualitative approach was best suited to achieve these goals. The qualitative approach is suitable when the research seeks to provide a rich, detailed description of a phenomenon (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020). This study aimed to obtain an in-depth description of the reasons behind low citizen participation in Mitaa meetings, affirming that a qualitative approach was the correct choice. It should also be noted that, qualitative research also emphasizes valuing respondents' dignity, perspectives, and autonomy (Tracy, 2020). This study prioritized participants' perspectives, opinions, views, and suggestions regarding Mitaa meetings, recognizing that as attendees, they offer valuable insights into why fellow citizens may be unwilling to participate.

Additionally, qualitative methods are chosen when numerical data alone are insufficient to decode an observed phenomenon (Flick, 2018). In this study, known quantitative data on low citizen participation were not enough to reveal citizens' perceptions of Mitaa meetings or the underlying reasons for low participation, thus necessitating a qualitative approach to move beyond mere numbers. Based on these considerations, the researcher used document analysis and in-depth, face-to-face interviews to collect data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

3.3 Study Population

Purposive sampling was used to select the study population. This non-probability sampling technique enables researchers to choose participants with the specific knowledge, experience, and characteristics relevant to the study (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). In this study, the researcher aimed to gather data from particular categories of participants namely, politicians, civil servants, and citizens, therefore this made purposive sampling an ideal choice. Another reason for choosing purposive sampling was that it permits the selection of participants who are knowledgeable about the topic of interest (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Patton, 1990). In this study, the researcher focused on respondents who were well-acquainted with Mitaa meetings in Ubungo, specifically targeting politicians, civil servants, and citizens who had resided in the relevant Mitaa for at least ten years. This focus on experienced respondents necessitated the use of purposive sampling.

As described above, purposive sampling allowed the researcher to specifically select participants from 5 out of the 14 wards and 10 out of the 90 Mitaa within the Ubungo Municipal Council. The study population was divided into two categories. The first category included local government leaders and officials at the Ward and Mtaa levels, while the second category comprised citizens from the selected Mitaa who have resided in the respective Mitaa for at least ten years.

i. For the first category of local government representatives, at the Ward level, the researcher selected two respondents from each Ward—one politician who was

the Ward Councilor and one local government executive -the Ward Executive Officer (WEO). Similarly, at the Mtaa level, two respondents were selected—one politician who was the Mtaa Chairperson and one local government executive-the Mtaa Executive Officer (MEO).

ii. In the second category, which focused on citizens, the researcher selected four respondents from each Mtaa (two males and two females) who had lived in the area for at least ten years.

Table 3.1: Analysis of the Study Population

No.	**Ward**	**Mitaa**	**Number of Participants**		
			Ward Level	**Mtaa Level**	**Citizen Level**
1	Goba	-	2		
		1.1 Kulangwa		2	4
		1.2 Matosa		2	4
2	Mbezi	-	2		
		2.1 Makabe		2	4
		2.2 MsakuziKaskazini		2	4
3	Kimara	-	2		
		3.1 Baruti		2	4
		3.2 Kilungule “A”		2	4
4	Sinza	-	2		
		4.1 Sinza “A”		2	4
		4.2 Sinza “E”		2	4
5	Manzese	-	2		
		5.1 Muungano		2	4
		5.2 Tupendane		2	4
			10	**20**	**40**
Total	**5 Wards**	**10 Mitaas**	**70 Participants**		

Source: Ubungo Council Municipal Profile of year 2016

3.4 Study Area

The research was conducted in Ubungo Municipal Council, one of the four municipal councils in the Dar es Salaam Region. The other three municipal councils are Kinondoni, Temeke, and Kigamboni (https://www.dsm.go.tz/statistics). Ubungo is also one of the three newest local government authorities (LGAs) in Tanzania, having been established in 2016 following the division of Kinondoni Municipal Council. Administratively, Ubungo is divided into 2 Divisions namely Kibamba and Magomeni, 14 wards, and 90 Mitaa. The other two newest municipal councils are Kigamboni and Kahama. Kigamboni Municipal Council consists of 3 Divisions, 9 Wards, and 67 Mitaa (https://kigambonimc.go.tz/statistics), while Kahama Municipal Council is divided into 4Divisions, 20 Wards, 45 Villages, and 32 Mitaa (https://kahamatc.go.tz/statistics).The selection of Ubungo Municipal Council was influenced by its highest human population compared with the newest municipalities in Tanzania. Given its highest population, it was expected to take a leading role in cultivating the culture of citizen participation. Therefore, the researcher was interested to know the situation in Ubungo.

Table 3.2: Population of the Newest Municipalities in Tanzania

SN.	Name of Municipal Council	Year of Establishment	2022 Human Population Census for Tanzania
1	Kigamboni Municipal Council	2016	317,902
2	Ubungo Municipal Council	2016	1,086,912
3	Kahama Municipal Council	2021	453,654

Source: 2022 Population and Housing Census

3.5 Sampling

The researcher used non-probability sampling techniques in selecting a sample size of 70 respondents from 5 Wards out of 14 and 10 Mitaa out of 90 found in Ubungo Municipal Council. Other grounds for employing the non-probability sampling are time bound, limited resources and purpose of the study. The sampling techniques included convenience, purpose and snowball (Thomas, 2022; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015; Tongco 2007; Wilmot, 2005).

The researcher used convenience sampling techniques in selecting respondents who were available and willing to share information to the researcher. Besides, the researcher applied purposive sampling in deciding the study population. The judgement of researcher relied on a balanced choice of wards from two constituencies in Ubungo Municipal Council. The researcher selected 2 Wards namely Mbezi and Goba from Kibamba constituency and 3 wards namely Kimara, Manzese and Sinza from Ubungo constituency. Finally, the researcher employed snowball sampling techniques for selecting residents who have resided in respective Mitaa for at least 10 years. The researcher adopted snowballing as he wanted to be introduced to other respondents who had the identified knowledge and experience of the study (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015).

3.6 Variables of the Study

A variable is anything that can vary as opposed to a constant. It is a characteristic or attribute of a study person or object that varies within the population or sample under

investigation (Msabila&Nalaila, 2013). The variables of the study were citizen perceptions of Mitaa meetings, reasons for low citizen participation in Mitaa meetings, and efforts and opportunities for improving Mitaa meetings.

3.7 Methods of Data Collection

The researcher conducted a desk review and in-depth face to face interview of 70 respondents during data collection. Before undertaking actual data collection, the researcher did an in-depth document review which includes studying primary and secondary sources such as meeting minutes, development implementation reports and government reports regarding Ubungo Municipal Council. These materials helped the researcher to get a broader understanding of the interested topic, study area and population. Interview is a suitable research technique for understanding perceptions in qualitative research because it brings the researcher into physical contact with respondents. After desk review of related materials, the researcher used interview guides prepared based on research objectives and questions for collecting qualitative data from respondents. The interview helps the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the problem under investigation (Patton, 1990; Radnor, 2002; Silverman, 2001; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Creswell, 1998).

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

Data analysis is a process of extracting meaning or making sense out of data. In order to make sense of data, the study employed qualitative data analysis techniques. The commonly applied techniques in analysing qualitative data are transcriptions, coding and

thematic analysis (Saldana, 2013). In this regard, the researcher reviewed all responses collected from the respondents and grouped them into themes and sub-themes. Furthermore, the researcher analysed data against the research questions for checking whether the findings are in consistent with the questions (Patton, 1990; Radnor, 2002; Silverman, 2001; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Creswell, 1998).

3.9 Validity and Reliability

Validity in qualitative research is the extent to which the researcher is able to establish that data collected are accurate and appropriate (Denscombe, 2017). In order to make sure that validity is demonstrated in qualitative research, the researcher applied strategies or methods such as respondent validation/member checking, grounded data, triangulation, rich description of findings, prolonged time in the field, peer debriefing, external auditor (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).In qualitative research, reliability refers to the extent to which the researcher can demonstrate that the research findings are consistent with the raw data collected from the field. Reliability helps other researchers outside of the research process to arrive at the same conclusions when they use the same raw data collected from the field (Denscombe, 2017). It is also known as dependability. In qualitative research, reliability checks are done through checking transcriptions, cross-checking of codes, inter-coder reliability, and coordination of the research team to ascertain whether the researcher has followed proper procedures in data collection, analysis and presentation. If all the necessary procedures were followed in conducting the qualitative research, therefore conclusions made by the researcher are correct. Another strategy used for checking reliability in qualitative researcher are audit trail

whereby another researcher audits the research procedures and confirm whether the collected data lead into the conclusions made.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical and professional standards of conducting research were upheld in order to avoid harming the respondents and destroying the quality of the study. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study so they could make informed and voluntary participation in interviews. The convenience of the respondents during data collection was equally observed, and confidential treatment of all data and information collected from respondents was guaranteed. Moreover, the use of personal and sensitive particulars like names of the respondents, their occupations, their political affiliations, marital and economic status, was avoided.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework employed in conducting the study. It focused on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of those involved. This approach was deemed suitable for capturing in-depth insights into the factors influencing citizen participation in Mitaa meetings in Ubungo municipality. The research was conducted in 5 wards and 10 Mitaa within the Ubungo Municipal Council. The study areas were purposively selected for their relevance to the study objectives. The study population comprised local government officials at Ward and Mtaalevels and ordinary citizens with lived experiences related to participation in Mitaa meetings for at least 10 years. A total of 70 respondents participated in the study, selected through

purposive and snowball sampling techniques to ensure diverse and information-rich perspectives. Key variables of the study were aligned with the objectives, focusing on levels, forms, and factors affecting of citizen participation. Data collection was carried out using two major techniques namely document review and in-depth face to face interviews. The document review was carried on policy documents, local government records, and meeting minutes for contextual understanding, while interviews enabled the researcher to capture the lived experiences of the respondents.

Data were processed and analysed thematically, with coding and categorization of patterns emerging from the narratives. This thematic analysis facilitated the identification of key themes reflecting perceptions surrounding citizen participation in Mitaa meetings. To enhance validity and reliability, the study employed data triangulation and careful transcription against the study objectives and questions to ensure accuracy and consistency of interpretations. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. In conclusion, this chapter has provided a comprehensive account of the research design, study population, methods, and ethical considerations that guided the undertaking of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Overview

This chapter describes, analyses, presents, and interprets the data gathered from the study population in Ubungo Municipal Council. The discussion of the findings is structured around the study's purpose, research objectives, and research questions

4.2 Response Rate

Data collection was smooth and timely due to the clarity of the purpose of the study, compliance with the procedures set by the University and the Municipal authority, as well as the accessibility, availability, and receptivity of the respondents. Given the core duties of the respondents, particularly the civil servants and politicians, almost all were available at their duty stations which are public offices and they participated freely and actively in the interview sessions. As a result, all respondents were reached, and the response rate was highly satisfactory. The respondents were categorized into three groups: politicians, civil servants, and citizens as shown in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Categories of Respondents in the Study

S/N	Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Politicians – Mtaa Chairpersons and Ward Councillors	15	21.43%
2	Civil Servants – Mtaa Executive Officers (MEOs) and Ward Executive Officers (WEOs)	15	21.43%
3	Citizens – Residents who have lived in the respective Mitaa for at least 10 years.	40	57.14%
Total		**70**	**100 %**

Source: Field Data, 2024

4.3 Study Coverage in Ubungo Municipal Council

The study covered 10 out of 90 Mitaa, which is 11.1% of all Mitaa, and 5 out of 14 Wards, which is 36% of the total number of Wards in Ubungo Municipal Council.

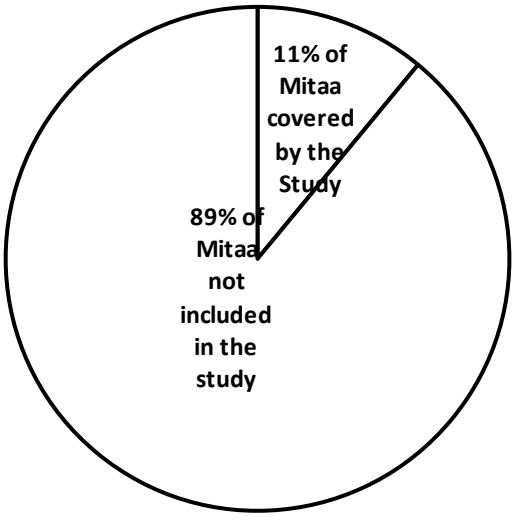
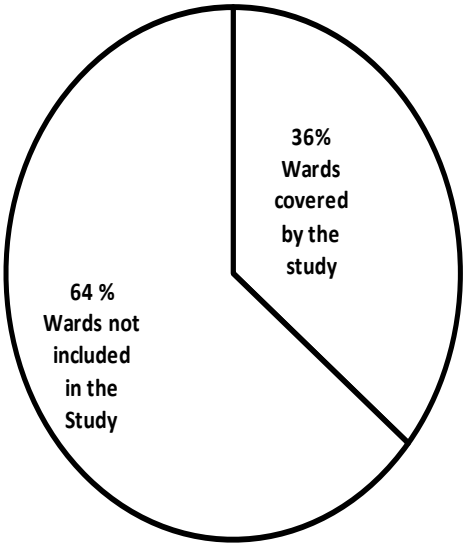
Chart 1: Percentage of Study Coverage at Mtaa Level	Chart 2: Percentage of Study Coverage atWard Level
	
Note: The chart illustrates that 11% of the Mitaa (10 out of 90) in Ubungo Municipal Council were covered by the study, whereas 89% (80 out of 90) were not included.	Note: The chart shows that 36% of the Wards in Ubungo Municipal Council (5 out of 14) were covered by the study, while 64% (9 out of 14) were not.

Figure 4.1: Study Coverage in Percentage in Ubungo Municipal Council

4.4 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The observed characteristics of the respondents included gender, age group, education level-particularly for civil servants, who are employed based on their educational qualifications, as well as the length of time they have lived in the respective Mitaa, especially for citizens. The study was also interested in the position and role of respondents in the community, particularly with regard to Mitaa meetings. There was no

significant gender gap among the respondents as males represented 57.14%, while females comprised 42.86% of the total number of respondents. Additionally, each age group was purposively represented in the data collection.

Table 4.2: Demographic Characteristics of the Study Respondents

SN	Category of Respondents	Gender		Age Group					Education level	
		Male	Female	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	56-65 years	66+years	Diploma	
1	Politicians	15	0	1	4	5	5	0	N/A	N/A
2	Civil Servants (MEOs and WEOs)	5	10	10	3	2	0	0	3	12
3	Citizens who have lived in the respective Mitaa for at least 10 years	20	20	3	7	14	11	5	N/A	N/A
Sub-Totals		40	30	14	14	21	16	5		
Total		**70**				**70**				

Source: Field Data, 2024

4.5 Citizen Perception of Mitaa Meetings

The general perception among citizens is that Mitaa meetings are important and should be maintained within the local government system. They believe that Mitaa meetings are crucial for making immediate interventions on issues affecting the Mtaa level, such as poor sanitation, waste management, land surveys, security concerns, and household conflicts. Citizens also note that Mtaa leaders sometimes perform the roles of mediators and arbitrators in family, marital, and interpersonal conflicts. Mitaa meetings are used as forums for initiating development projects with citizen backing, as well as for seeking financial, material, and in-kind donations to implement community projects, such as the construction of classrooms at public schools. They also serve as platforms for influencing municipal by-laws and national policies. Citizens regard Mitaa meetings as reliable and official sources of public notices, policies, by-laws, and government plans. Furthermore, they view these meetings as free and open avenues for citizen participation in public affairs at the grassroots level, in line with policy and legal frameworks.

Despite their positive perception of the crucial role Mitaa meetings play, citizens are concerned about their minimal involvement in agenda formulation and the traditional conduct of these meetings, where citizens primarily participate to endorse decisions made by Mtaa leaders. There is a sense among citizens that they are not given enough opportunities to exercise their legal mandate of holding elected leaders and civil servants accountable. Many also feel that party interests undermine citizens' priorities, with leaders being more influenced by party agendas than the real needs of the community.

Another weakness highlighted is that the meeting agendas often focus on soliciting donations for development projects.

Table 4.3: Citizen Perception of Mitaa Meetings

S/N	Issues discussed during the interview with Respondents (Citizen Category)	Number of Respondents	Responses		Percentage of YES responses
			YES	NO	
1	Are you aware about Mitaa Meetings?	40	37	3	92.5%
2	Have you heard any public announcements made for Mitaa Meetings?	40	36	4	90%
3	Have you attended any Mitaa meetings in this year?	40	12	28	30%
4	Will you attend the next Mitaa meetings	40	32	8	80%
5	Should Mitaa meetings maintained within the legal framework?	40	38	2	95%
6	Are there are positive outcomes attached to Mitaa Meetings?	40	34	6	85%
7	Are there improvements needed in conduct of Mitaa meetings?	40	30	10	75%

Source: Field Data, 2024

4.6 Citizen Participation in Mitaa Meetings

Despite the well-established crucial role of Mitaa meetings, the study found that the number of citizens attending the meetings is unsatisfactory and below expectations. The

average citizen attendance is 3%, based on data collected from 10 Mitaa in Ubungo Municipality. This reflects low citizen participation in public governance and development planning, as required by Articles 8, 21, and 146 of the Constitution of Tanzania. It is an unacceptable reality that requires collective efforts from stakeholders.

Table 4.4: Number of Citizens versus Attendance in Mitaa Meetings

S/N	Name of Mtaa	2022 Human PopulationCensus for Tanzania	Number of Adult Citizens in the Respective Mitaa	Average Number of Citizens who Attend to the Mitaa Meetings	Percentage of Citizen Attendance to the Mitaa Meetings
1	Kulangwa	10852	7173	87	1.2%
2	Matosa	20153	13321	186	1.4%
3	Makabe	18198	12029	213	1.8%
4	MsakuziKaskazini	18081	11952	135	1.1%
5	Baruti	14383	9507	219	2.3%
6	Kilungule “A”	10882	7193	208	2.9%
7	Sinza “A”	4613	3049	114	3.7%
8	Sinza “E”	7398	4890	122	2.3%
9	Muungano	5554	3671	220	5.9%
10	Tupendane	7284	4815	361	7.5%
Average Attendance to the Mitaa Meetings				**187**	**3%**

Source: Field Data, 2024

4.7 Sex and Age in Relation to Participation in Mitaa meetings

Based on the meeting minutes reviewed, the data show that the number of females attending the meetings is higher than that of males. The data reflect the 2022 Population and Housing Census of Tanzania, in which females make up more than half of the total population (51.3%). They also align with the registered voter data from the 2020 general elections, where women constituted more than half of the total voters (50.4%). Despite youth aged between 18-35 years being the largest cohort of registered voters in Tanzania (15,986,675 out of 29,754,699 voters), they are the lowest participants in Mitaa meetings. The data show that most Mitaa meetings are attended by adults over 45 years old and the elderly, aged 60 and above.

4.8 Reasons for Low Citizen Participation in Mitaa Meetings

In the search for the reasons behind low citizen participation, the researcher consulted two key categories of stakeholders during the data collection process: the duty bearers responsible for organizing Mitaa meetings and the citizens who are supposed to attend these meetings. The reasons shared by both stakeholders are in agreement, and they contribute to the problem both directly or indirectly. Stakeholders admit the negative outcomes of low participation and they are ready to take responsibility for addressing the problem. The following are the reasons behind low citizen participation in Mitaa meetings based on cumulative findings collected from the field.

4.8.1 Commitment to Personal Engagements over Community Priorities

Most residents in urban areas are fully engaged in office jobs and entrepreneurial activities, which negatively affects their participation in Mitaa meetings. Although most meetings are held on Saturdays and Sundays, this schedule is not convenient for residents, as it conflicts with their priorities. Many residents dedicate most of their time to income generation through office work and business activities. Weekends are typically reserved for family commitments, social events, and religious gatherings. All respondents agreed that most residents who are supposed to attend the meetings are not available, despite being aware of the meeting schedule.

4.8.2 Minimal Opportunity for Citizen Participation in Agenda Formulation

Meeting agendas are the basis for discussion, resolutions, and actions. Therefore, the agenda determines the general outcomes of the meeting. If citizens don't have an opportunity to formulate the agenda, it means they have limited influence over the issues to be discussed and the outcomes. Most citizens feel discouraged by the agenda formulation process. They believe that the meeting agendas are created to favour the interests of the Mtaa leadership, not the citizens. They feel that critical issues facing citizens are often overlooked in Mitaa meetings. This is another reason why they are demotivated to participate in the meetings. Since they don't participate in developing the meeting agenda, they feel that they are not the centre of the meeting, which leads to low attendance.

4.8.3 Upholding Party Interests during the Conduct of Mitaa Meetings

The study found that Mitaa meetings are often facilitated in favour of party interests. The party that forms the Mtaa leadership is defended and praised, even if it has failed to deliver on its promises and meet citizen expectations. Most citizens who attend the meetings support the party that won the elections. Mobilization of citizens to attend the meetings is often carried out through party leaders and grassroots networks. Many Mtaa leaders feel comfortable seeing citizens who support their party attending the meetings. As a result, neutral citizens feel excluded, and public meetings are seen as party events. This tendency discourages them from attending. In such an environment, it becomes difficult for citizens to discuss critical issues and hold Mtaa leaders accountable for failing to address the concerns of the community.

4.8.4 Unpredictable Schedules for Mitaa Meetings

Legal frameworks, including the Constitution, legislation, regulations, and guidelines on local government, require Mitaa meetings to be held at least once every two months. Although this is a binding legal requirement, there are no regular and fixed schedules for conducting Mitaa meetings. Most meetings are held based on convenience and without any permanent timetable. As a result, instead of holding a minimum of six meetings per year, Mitaa leaders hold only 2 to 3 meetings annually. This reflects poor performance by Mtaa leaders in fulfilling their duties. It also suggests a lack of close oversight from higher authorities to hold Mtaa leaders accountable for failing to conduct regular meetings. On the other hand, citizens are not exercising their right to demand accountability, which is part of their civil and political rights.

Table 4.5: Legal Requirements for Convening Mitaa Meetings versus Current Practices

Legal Framework	Legal Requirements	Practice	Percentage
Articles 8, 21, 145 and 146 of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1977 and Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act, Chapter 288, Section 16 (6).	Minimum Number of Mitaa Meetings which must be held per year.	Actual number of Mitaa Meetings convened annually.	Mitaa Meetings convened annually.
Total	**6**	**2-3**	**33%-50%**

Source: Field Data, 2024

4.8.5 No Direct Personal Benefits Associated with Mitaa Meetings

Mitaa meetings address issues of interest to the entire community, not personal matters. Because of this, some citizens do not see the need to participate in these meetings, as they feel they are not relevant and do not add value to their personal lives. They argue that these meetings do not provide direct, personal benefits to them, unlike community-based financial institutions such as SACCOS and VICOBA. For them, participating in these meetings feels like wasting valuable time that could be spent generating income. According to the data shared, most citizens are more attracted to meetings that offer personal gains. Therefore, for Mitaa meetings, they believe it is sufficient for them to be represented by their fellow citizens. As a result, many citizens choose not to participate in Mitaa meetings.

4.8.6 Reliance on Problems facing Respective Mitaa

Mitaa meetings focus on discussing problems rather than exploring available opportunities for citizens to invest or partner with local government authorities in the delivery of social services, improving the lives of residents, or creating employment opportunities. This creates the perception that the meetings are solely about addressing problems. Among the issues discussed are the shortage of classrooms and desks in public schools, rising robbery and criminal activity, land encroachment, poor waste management and sanitation, limited access to clean water, and inadequate road infrastructure. All of these issues require citizens to propose solutions, which may involve making financial contributions. As a result, citizens do not see the need to attend Mitaa meetings, as they believe the meetings primarily involve sharing the burden of social service delivery with the government.

4.8.7 LowLegitimacy of Mtaa Leaders among Citizens

For citizens to turn out in large numbers to participate in Mitaa meetings, Mtaa leaders must have excellent capacity to convince, mobilize, inspire, and influence citizens. For this to happen, leaders must unquestionable legitimacy among citizens. Respondents pointed out that Mtaa leaders have little influence among citizens, and therefore, they cannot mobilize citizens to attend the meetings. They shared that when there are extraordinary Mitaa meetings, which are attended by either the Member of Parliament or the District Commissioner, attendance increases dramatically. Therefore, the poor attendance at Mitaa meetings also reflects the low influence of Mtaa leaders

4.8.8 Inconclusive Decisions in Mitaa Meetings

The decisions made in Mitaa meetings are not final and conclusive like those made in Village assemblies under District authorities. Mitaa meetings are merely delegated powers of the Municipal Council. Mitaa units serve as coordination bodies for the Municipal Council, and therefore, they do not have the full authority to make final decisions on certain matters. Within the jurisdiction of the Municipal Council, the decision-making organ with full authority is the full council. Both Mitaa meetings and committees are meant to implement decisions passed by the Municipal Council and serve as advisory bodies to it. Some decisions from Mitaa meetings, particularly regarding development projects, require the approval of the Municipal Director. Citizens do not even have the power to hold elected leaders accountable for poor performance, misconduct, or failure to deliver on promises. As a result, citizens see no need to participate in meetings that are not powerful enough to make final and conclusive decisions regarding their welfare.

4.8.9 Low Civic Education among Citizens

Low awareness among citizens of their civic rights and responsibilities is one of the contributing factors to poor participation in Mitaa meetings. Some citizens believe that if they don’t attend, they won’t lose anything, while others assume that only certain categories of people are supposed to attend these meetings. All of these reflect low civic education among citizens, which affects their free and active participation in Mitaa meetings.

4.8.10 Lack of Financial Resources for Organization of Mitaa meetings

Conducting meetings requires both financial and material resources. It is surprising to discover that, despite the importance of Mitaa meetings in upholding constitutional and legal provisions as well as basic human rights, no resources are allocated to ensure that these meetings are conducted effectively and on time as required by law. Additionally, both local and national budget cycles begin with Mitaa meetings, where citizens share their priorities and concerns, which inform the budget preparation process. However, there is no designated budget line for these meetings. As a result, citizen participation is poor because there are no financial resources for mobilization. Mtaa leaders are expected to raise funds without reliable sources of income. They are advised to seek donations from citizens to conduct the meetings, but as is well known, donations are unreliable, as citizens are not obligated to contribute.

4.8.11 Volunteering Mtaa Leaders

All elected Mtaa leaders work as volunteers. Due to the lack of payment, their commitment and attention to fulfilling their responsibilities, including ensuring that Mitaa meetings are held effectively, is negatively affected. It is unreasonable to expect commitment and motivation from leaders who receive no form of payment or reimbursement for costs. It is well known that executing responsibilities requires resources, and because the leaders are not paid, they lack the necessary resources to discharge their duties effectively. As a result, they may become negligent, offering excuses, or they may be tempted to engage in dishonest actions as a way of compensating themselves.

Some leaders view holding meetings as an additional burden, as they need to walk or visit households to mobilize citizens to attend. Consequently, they may postpone meetings or hold them without proper mobilization, leading to unsatisfactory citizen participation.

4.8.12 Ambulant Residents

Data show a significant number of residents in the respective Mitaa, but the majority of these residents are tenants who frequently move from one Mtaa to another or even change regions. Respondents indicated that most tenants are not motivated to attend Mitaa meetings because they consider themselves temporary residents with no reason to engage in community duties or commitments. Mitaa meetings are primarily attended by citizens who have established permanent residence or those who have invested in the respective Mitaas through real estate or business ventures. This group of citizens attends the meetings to defend their interests or influence decisions that may affect their investments. Although this group is influential, their numbers are small, so their attendance does not significantly improve overall participation.

4.8.13 Secrecy and Unaccountability of Mitaa Leaders

Citizen participation is often affected by poor governance, which includes a lack of transparency, weak accountability, and questionable integrity among Mtaa leaders, particularly regarding financial resources. When leaders operate in secrecy, especially concerning the income and expenditures of the respective Mitaa, citizens may become

discouraged from attending meetings, as they sense that the leaders are serving their own personal interests rather than those of the community

4.8.14 Lack of Information about Mitaa Meetings

Some citizens do not attend Mitaa meetings because they are not aware of them. Announcements are usually made verbally via a public address system, but they do not reach the entire Mtaa, and by the time the announcements are made, some citizens are not at home. As a result, Mitaa meetings are typically attended by the same individuals who have access to the information.

4.9 Efforts in place for improving citizen participation in Mitaa Meetings

Poor citizen participation in Mitaa meetings pose challenges to all stakeholders involved, as it undermines the effectiveness of community engagement and decision-making processes. In response to this problem, various efforts have been undertaken, and numerous opportunities have been created to encourage greater participation and address the root causes of the problem. These initiatives aim to ensure that more citizens are actively involved in these important forums, fostering collaboration and inclusivity in local governance. The specific efforts in place for improving citizen participation in Mitaa meetings are discussed in detail below:

4.9.1 Using Social Media Applications and Networks

Some Mitaa committees have established WhatsApp groups specifically for the residents of their respective Mitaa as a way to inform, engage, and mobilize them to actively participate in meetings. These groups serve as an effective platform for real-time

communication, allowing for the rapid dissemination of important information, reminders, and updates regarding upcoming meetings. In addition to WhatsApp, other committees have taken advantage of popular social media platforms such as Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) to further enhance their outreach efforts. Through these platforms, they share announcements, posts, and interactive content that not only inform citizens about Mitaa meetings but also encourage broader community engagement. These digital channels provide an accessible and efficient way to reach a wide audience, especially youth who may be more active on social media, thereby increasing the likelihood of higher attendance and participation in Mitaa meetings and local governance at large.

4.9.2 Using Influential, Respected and Grassroot Party Leaders

Community leaders who hold significant influence within their local neighbourhoods are actively engaged to encourage greater participation in Mitaa meetings. Among the most commonly relied upon grassroots leaders for this task are party leaders, who possess a strong connection with the residents in their respective areas. These leaders typically have influence over around 50 households, making them a valuable resource for mobilizing community members and ensuring that information about meetings reaches a broad audience. Historically, these leaders were known as cell leaders or trustworthy party ambassadors, and their role in the community remains vital to fostering communication, building trust, and rallying citizens to take part in local governance. By leveraging the leadership and influence of these leaders, Mtaa leadership are able to enhance citizen involvement in Mitaa meetings.

4.9.3 Employing Religious Structures

Announcements about Mitaa meetings are also shared with religious leaders to ensure that the information reaches a broader audience, particularly believers who regularly attend places of worship such as churches, mosques, and temples. This approach leverages the influential role of religious institutions within the community, as they often serve as central points for communication and gathering. By involving religious leaders, local authorities aim to foster greater awareness and encourage participation in these meetings, recognizing the trust and respect these leaders command among their congregants. Additionally, this strategy helps to bridge gaps in communication, particularly for citizens who may not have access to other forms of information dissemination, such as public announcements and public notice boards.

4.9.4 Arts and Entertainment

Citizens are also mobilized to participate in Mitaa meetings through the use of songs, music, comedy, and traditional ngomas. This creative and culturally rich approach plays a significant role in drawing attention of citizens and encouraging them to participate in meetings. It is especially relevant in areas like Manzese, where residents are known to be particularly drawn to culturally infused music and performances. These forms of entertainment not only serve as a means of communication but also create a lively and engaging atmosphere that fosters a sense of community. By integrating cultural elements into the mobilization efforts, local leaders are able to capture the interest of a diverse audience, ensuring that the message reaches to citizens from various backgrounds in an appealing and memorable way.

4.9.5 Creation of Meeting Zones within the Respective Mitaa

This strategy is particularly employed in Mitaa with extensive geographical coverage, such as those in Mbezi, Goba, and Kimara wards, where it is challenging for all citizens to attend meetings at a single centralized location. To address this issue, the Mitaa is divided into smaller zones, and separate meetings are conducted in each zone. This zoning approach ensures that meetings are more accessible to residents, enabling a larger proportion of citizens from different parts of the Mitaa to participate. By bringing meetings closer to the people, this method minimizes the barriers posed by distance and transportation, fostering greater inclusivity and ensuring that the voices and concerns of residents across the Mitaa are heard and addressed effectively.

4.9.6 Bulk SMS

Bulk SMS messages are sent directly to the residents of the respective Mtaa as a means of informing them about upcoming meetings and encouraging their participation. Thetext messages shared via mobile phones serve as a convenient and efficient communication tool, ensuring that information reaches citizens promptly and directly. The content of the messages emphasizes the importance of their attendance, highlighting that their active participation is crucial for the success and effectiveness of the meetings. By using this approach, Mtaa leaders aim to remind residents of their civic responsibilities and foster a sense of involvement in Mtaa meetings, making it easier for citizens to stay informed and engaged, regardless of their location or daily commitments.

4.9.7 Invitation of Influential Leaders

Mtaa committees may also extend invitations to influential leaders, such as the District Commissioner and Members of Parliament, to participate in Mitaa meetings. These leaders are well-respected and hold significant authority, which can enhance the perceived importance of the meetings among citizens. Their attendance is typically publicized in advance as part of a broader strategy to increase turnout, as the presence of such prominent figures is likely to draw more residents to the Mitaa meetings as they may be eager to hear from or interact with them directly. This approach not only increasescitizen attendance to the meetings but also creates an opportunity for citizens to voice their concerns and suggestions to higher-level authorities, thereby strengthening the connection between the community and their local leaders.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented and analysed data collected from citizens, civil servants, and politicians in Ubungo Municipal Council, structured around the study's core objectives and research questions. The study achieved full participation from all targeted respondents due to strong institutional support and respondent availability. According to the findings, citizens perceived Mitaa meetings as essential for grassroots governance, conflict mediation, local development, formal avenues for policy updates, implementation and feedback. However, they expressed dissatisfaction with the limited input allowed in setting the meeting agendas, the dominance of political party interests, and the absence of effective mechanisms to hold local leaders accountable. Despite

acknowledging the significance of these meetings, actual citizen attendance remained low.

Various barriers were identified as contributing to low participation. These included competing personal and economic commitments, exclusion from agenda-setting processes, politicization of meetings, irregular and inconvenient scheduling, and a widespread perception that attending the meetings yields little personal benefit. Other factors included the meetings' focus on problems rather than opportunities, weak legitimacy and limited influence of Mtaa leaders, inconclusive decision-making power at the Mitaa level, low levels of civic awareness, poor publicity, the voluntary and unsupported nature of Mtaa leadership, high mobility among residents referred to the study as ambulant residents and general governance concerns such as secrecy and lack of transparency and accountability.

In response, several efforts have been taken to improve participation. These include the use of social media platforms, bulk SMS, and WhatsApp groups to disseminate information; engagement of grassroots political leaders and religious institutions; cultural mobilization through music and dance; the introduction of zonal meetings in large Mitaa to improve accessibility; and the strategic invitation of high-profile leaders to attract citizen attendance. Collectively, these strategies aim to address both structural and perceptual challenges to enhance inclusivity and active citizen participation in local governance processes.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, general conclusions drawn from those findings, and recommendations made by the researcher on actions that should be taken to address the problems identified by the study

5.2 Summary of the Study Findings

In light of the three objectives that guided the study, it was found that the majority of citizens have a positive attitude toward Mitaa meetings and have recommended their continued integration into the local government system in Tanzania. The study respondents also identified several reasons for low citizen participation in Mitaa meetings, which primarily fall into two categories: citizens and leaders. For citizens, the reasons include the prioritization of personal interests over community interests and low civic education. For Mtaa leaders, the reasons are both internal and external, such as the irresponsibility of Mtaa leaders, their low capacity to influence citizens, exclusion of citizens from agenda formulation, the tendency to treat citizens as donors for development projects, poor transparency and accountability, and limited powers and authority of Mitaa meetings. Furthermore, the lack of financial resources to mobilize citizens to attend Mitaa meetings is another challenge.

On the other hand, efforts to improve citizen participation, such as using social media networks and applications, arts and entertainment, sending bulk SMS, dividing Mitaa

into smaller segments (zones), engaging influential leaders at the household level, and utilizing religious networks, have not yielded the expected results.

5.3 Conclusions

The study concludes that, although a range of factors contribute to the low levels of citizen participation in Mitaa meetings and the efforts made to improve citizen participation have, so far, yielded unsatisfactory outcomes, Mitaa meetings continue to be crucial platforms for citizen engagement in public affairs at lower levels. These meetings are an integral part of citizens' basic civil and political rights, offering them a direct channel to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their communities and daily lives. Moreover, Mitaa meetings provide invaluable opportunities for gathering the views, opinions, perceptions, and suggestions of residents, which are essential for informing policy formation and implementation at different levels. These meetings also offer a space where real development priorities can be initiated by citizens and ensuring that the concerns and real needs of the community are considered in the planning and execution of local government projects. Despite the challenges, Mitaa meetings hold significant potential for fostering greater civic participation, accountability, and the development of more responsive policies.

5.4 Recommendations

After conducting the study, the researcher has proposed several recommendations aimed at addressing the problem of poor citizen participation in Mitaa meetings. These recommendations are informed by the study findings and they are proposed solutions

intended to deal with the root causes of low participation and enhance the effectiveness of Mitaa meetings as rooted on their purpose of establishment. The recommendations are directed to different institutions, including ministries, local government authorities, civil society organisations and political parties, with the duty of ensuring that appropriate actions are taken. It is important for these recommendations be executed collaboratively by stakeholders for improved citizen participation in these meetings. Below are the specific recommendations, which should be carefully considered and acted upon to bring about positive change.

5.4.1 Recommendations to the President's Office - Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG)

- To propose to the Parliament amending the Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act, Chapter 288, to grant more powers to the Mitaa meetings greater on decision-making. Currently, Mitaa meetings are primarily seen as coordination units of the Ward Development Committees and Municipal Councils, with limited authority on key decisions. However, by amending the Act, Mitaa meetings could be empowered to make binding decisions that directly impact the welfare and development of the Mtaa.

  The amendment of the Law would recognize the importance of Mitaa meetings as essential forums in local governance, enabling them to play a more active and independent role in addressing the needs and concerns of citizens at grassroots. Empowering Mitaa meetings in this way would help enhance community engagement, ensure that decisions reflect the priorities

of citizens, and strengthen the democratic process at the grassroots level. The amendment would also empower citizens to hold their leaders accountable and promote a more decentralized approach to local governance, where local communities have a more direct say in their own development priorities.

- To recognise Mtaa leaders as equally important as other representatives like Ward Councillors and Members of Parliament, given the critical role they play in representing and serving their communities at the grassroots level. These leaders are directly involved in dealing with the day-to-day issues that affect residents and are often the first point of contact for citizens seeking assistance or voicing concerns. As such, it is crucial that they are provided with the necessary support and resources to perform their duties effectively and with the respect they deserve. One key aspect of this recognition is to offer Mtaa leaders reimbursement for the costs they incurred in undertaking their responsibilities. This will enable them to fulfill their responsibilities with dignity and a sense of commitment. Providing fair compensation will not only acknowledge the value of their contributions but also motivate them to engage more actively and invest in the well-being of their communities.

  This will also ensure that Mtaa leaders are empowered to lead with authority and dedication in enhancing community development efforts.

5.4.2 Recommendations to the Ministry of Finance

- To allocate resources in the national budget specifically to support the conducting of Mitaa meetings. Just as meetings at the municipal and national levels are planned and funded through budget allocations, a similar approach should be adopted at the grassroots level. Mitaa meetings are also essential forums where citizens come together to discuss issues of local importance. Therefore, for these meetings to be conducted effectively, they require adequate financial support. This practice of allocating resources for Mitaa meetings would not only elevate their significance but also demonstrate a commitment to supporting local democracy and empowering citizens to engage in decision-making processes. Ensuring proper funding would facilitate logistics, enable the provision of necessary materials, and ensure the participation of a broader segment of the community, ultimately leading to more meaningful and impactful discussions at the local level.

- To facilitate the payment of Mtaa leaders, in a manner similar to how Ward Councillors and Members of Parliament receive renumerations for their roles and responsibilities. Mtaa leaders play a crucial part in local governance, directly engaging with citizens to address their concerns and facilitate communication between the community and local authorities.

  Just as Ward Councillors and Members of Parliament receive remuneration to enable them to carry out their duties effectively, Mtaa leaders should also

be provided with remuneration that reflects the significance of their position. The remuneration would not only acknowledge the importance of their contributions to the communities but also ensure that they are able to dedicate the necessary time and effort to serving their communities. By offering financial support, Mtaa leaders will be better equipped to fulfill their roles with greater commitment and responsibility, ultimately strengthening citizen participation for sustainable socio-economic development.

5.4.3 Recommendations to the President's Office-Public Service Management and Good Governance (PO-PSM&GG)

To formally integrate Mtaa leaders into the public service under the political category, similar to the roles of District Commissioners, Regional Commissioners, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Members of Parliament and Ward Councillors. By recognizing Mtaa leaders within the formal public service structure, they would be afforded the same level of respect, recognition, and benefits as other key public servants. This integration would ensure that Mtaa leaders are provided with access to the necessary resources, training, and support to effectively execute their responsibilities. Additionally, by offering them benefits comparable to those of other public servants, such as health insurance, pension plans, and other welfare provisions, Mtaa leaders would be motivated to perform their duties with greater dedication and a sense of stability.

Such a move would further elevate the importance of local governance, empowering Mtaa leaders to serve their communities with the same commitment and authority as

higher-level government officials. This would also ensure that their role in fostering community development and addressing the needs of local residents is properly supported and recognized within the broader public service framework.

5.4.4 Recommendations to Local Government Authorities (LGAs)

- To continue building the capacity of Mtaa leaders for enhancing their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This would include educating them on the principles of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, so that they can apply these principles effectively in their daily work. By strengthening their knowledge and skills, Mtaa leaders will be better equipped to serve their communities and address the needs of local residents.

- To create an enabling environment that allows Mtaa leaders to carry out their responsibilities effectively. This includes ensuring that they have the necessary tools, support, and infrastructure to perform their duties with efficiency and confidence. An enabling environment also means fostering a culture of collaboration and communication among Mtaa leaders, community members, and local authorities, to ensure that all stakeholders are working together towards common goals.

- To monitor the conduct of Mitaa meetings is also critical. Regular follow-ups should be carried out to ensure that Mtaa leaders are fulfilling their core functions and upholding their responsibilities.

In cases where leaders fail to perform their duties, appropriate accountability measures should be put in place to address any shortcomings and ensure that they are held responsible for their actions.

- To allocate sufficient resources to the Mitaa Committees is necessary to enable them to effectively carry out the responsibilities entrusted to them. This includes financial resources, logistical support, and administrative assistance, ensuring that the committees have everything they need to manage community affairs and organize productive meetings. Proper resource allocation will empower Mitaa leaders to effectively engage with residents, gather feedback, and contribute to the development and well-being of their communities.

5.4.5 Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- To build the capacity of citizens to understand well their rights and responsibilities particularly in relation to participation in Mitaa meetings. It is essential to provide citizens with civic education within the context of local governance. Specifically, citizens should be informed about the importance of their participation in Mitaa meetings, where they have the opportunity to voice their concerns, contribute to discussions, and influence decisions that directly affect their communities. By increasing their understanding of these processes, citizens will be more empowered to take an active role and participate in Mitaa meetings, recognizing that their

involvement is crucial to the development and betterment of their neighbourhoods.

- To foster collaboration with local government authorities in ensuring that citizens are effectively mobilized to participate in decision-making processes, particularly in Mitaa meetings. Civil society organisations (CSOs) can play a significant role in reaching out to communities, providing the necessary information, and organizing initiatives that encourage active participation of citizens into local governance. Through joint efforts, both local authorities and civil society organisations can create a more inclusive environment where citizens feel valued and motivated to engage in discussions that impact their lives. This collaborative approach will strengthen the relationship between the government and the people, promoting a more transparent, accountable, and responsive system of governance at the grassroots level.

5.4.6 Recommendations to Political Parties

- To regard Mtaa leaders as essential stakeholders responsible for implementation of party policies. Mtaa leaders serve as the critical link between the government and local communities. They have direct access to feedback from citizens, providing them with valuable insights into the needs, concerns, and priorities of the communities.

Their role in translating national or municipal policies into actionable initiatives at the local level is crucial, and by acknowledging their influence and importance in ensuring that policies are effectively communicated and tailored to meet the specific needs of residents.

- To focus on grooming and nominating candidates with strong leadership qualities and the capacity to serve in elective positions at the Mtaa level. This would involve identifying citizens who possess the skills, knowledge, and commitment to effectively represent their communities. These candidates should be equipped with the tools necessary to lead with integrity, transparency, and dedication, ensuring that they can serve their communities effectively and make decisions that align with the best interests of the residents they represent.
- To mobilize citizens to actively participate in Mitaa meetings for strengthening local governance and enhancing community welfare. It is crucial for parties to create awareness about the significance of these meetings and encourage citizens to take an active role in discussions, decision-making, and problem-solving for the betterment of their community. By fostering a culture of participation, local leaders can ensure that decisions are more inclusive and representative of the diverse needs of the population.

- To establish clear and effective mechanisms for holding Mtaa leaders accountable for maintaining trust and integrity within local governance structures. This can be achieved through regular performance evaluations, feedback from the community, and a transparent system of checks and balances. Holding Mtaa leaders accountable ensures that they remain focused on their responsibilities and are motivated to serve the community with fairness, honesty, and dedication. It also provides citizens with the assurance that their concerns are taken seriously and that leaders are acting in their best interests.

5.5 Proposed Areas for Further Study

No study can be considered entirely exhaustive, as every research endeavour focuses on specific aspects within a broader and more complex context. Each study is like a single thread woven into a larger fabric or a solitary drop in the vast ocean of knowledge, contributing to the ongoing exploration of a subject. As such, the findings of this study open up numerous avenues for further inquiry, where deeper insights and more comprehensive understanding can be developed. To build on the current research and address local governance concerns that have not been fully explored, the researcher proposes the following areas for further study: -

i. The impact of policy and legal frameworks in influencing citizen participation in Mitaa meetings.

ii. Assessing the impact of resource allocation on Mitaa meetings and the effective of citizen participation.

iii. Influence of capacity strengthening on the performance of Mtaa leaders in local government.

iv. Assessing the practicality of citizen involvement in agenda formulation for the effectiveness of Mitaa meetings.

v. Evaluating the role of party politics in citizen participation at the grassroots

vi. Examining how best can opposition political parties hold Mtaa leaders accountable.

vii. The impact of structural relationship between Municipal councils and Mitaa meetings on citizen participation.

viii. The Role and Necessity of Political Parties in Local Governance

5.6 Chapter Summary

This is the last chapter has covered the summary of the study findings, conclusions, and recommendations as informed by the study. The research revealed that, while citizens strongly support Mitaa meetings and advocate for their continued integration into the local government system, actual participation remains critically low. This gap is attributed to both citizen-related and leadership-related factors. On the citizens' side, low civic awareness and the prioritization of personal interests hinder their engagement. From the leadership perspective, poor transparency, limited authority, exclusionary

practices in agenda-setting, and inadequate mobilization efforts contribute significantly to disengagement. Additionally, financial constraints further limit the capacity to effectively convene and publicize these meetings.

Despite the introduction and implementation of well-known strategies such as digital communication tools, cultural mobilization, and leveraging with religious platforms, these efforts have had only a minimal impact on enhancing citizen participation in Mitaa meetings. However, these meetings remain indispensable platforms for grassroots democratic engagement, serving as vital conduits for community input, accountability, and policy responsiveness.

Moreover, the chapter has provided specific recommendations to key stakeholders, including the President's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), the Ministry of Finance, the President's Office – Public Service Management and Good Governance (PO-PSM&GG), Local Government Authorities (LGAs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and political parties. These recommendations advocate for legal reforms to strengthen the authority of Mitaa meetings, formal recognition and compensation of Mtaa leaders, capacity building, and institutional support to enhance both citizen and leader engagement. The chapter further emphasizes the need for civic education and inter-institutional collaboration to foster a participatory and accountable local governance system.

Lastly, the chapter has outlined potential areas for further research to deepen understanding of structural, legal, political, and operational dynamics affecting citizen

participation. These include analyses of legal frameworks, resource allocation, capacity building programs among Mtaa leaders, political accountability, and intergovernmental relations. Collectively, these future studies are essential for advancing inclusive and effective local governance in Tanzania.

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APPENDIXES

Interview Guide

Introduction of the Interviewer and Purpose

My name is Goodluck Justine, a postgraduate student at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT), pursuing a Master's Degree in Governance and Leadership (MAGL). I am currently in the final phase of my studies, and in accordance with the university's academic requirements, each student is expected to conduct a research project on a topic of their choice that aligns with their field of study. In this regard, I am conducting research on *Factors Influencing Citizen Participation in Mitaa Meetings in Tanzania: Experience from Ubungo Municipal Council*. I am therefore requesting your time and cooperation to participate in this interview, which is an essential component for gathering the data required to complete my study.Please be assured that all the information you provide will be used solely for academic purposes related to this research.

Personal Information of the Interviewee:

- Title/Role/Position in the Community: _____
- Gender: _____
- Residence (Ward/Mtaa): _____
- Age group: 18-25 (__) 26-35(__) 36-45(___) 46-55(__) 56-65 (__) 66+ (__)
- How long have you been living in this area? less than ten years (__), more than ten years (___)

Interview Guide

1. Are you aware about Mitaa meeting?
2. Are Mitaa meetings important to the community? If YES, how?
3. Which kind of people are supposed to attend Mitaa meeting?
4. Do you know the purpose of Mitaa meetings? If yes, mention any purpose you know_____
5. What agenda or issues are discussed in these meetings?
6. How regularly do you think Mitaa meetings should be held?
7. Who is supposed to hold Mtaa meeting?
8. Where is Mtaa meeting held? Is the meeting place conducive and accessible?
9. Is it compulsory for Mitaa meetings to be held?
10. Is there a program for Mitaa meetings?
11. If Mitaa meetings are not convened, is there any legal or disciplinary actions taken against responsible leaders? Mention any
12. Have you ever attended in any Mitaa meeting? When? how many times in this year?
13. What motivated or influenced you to attend or not to attend these meetings?
14. How many citizens attended the last Mtaa meeting?
15. Do citizens get an opportunity to share their views, experiences, opinions, recommendations, ask questions or seek clarifications during Mtaa meeting?
16. Do majority of citizens attend Mtaa meeting? If yes/no give reasons
17. How do citizens get information about the presence of Mtaa meeting?
18. Are the ways used to announce Mitaa meetings effective?
19. What can be done to improve citizen attendance in Mitaa meetings?
20. How do you find the preparation and organization of Mitaa meetings?
21. Have you ever witnessed any negative experience concerning Mtaa meeting?
22. Are Mitaa meetings instrumental in socio-economic development of the community?

23. Given your experience, why citizens are not attending Mitaa meetings?
24. Between males and females, which gender is more interested in attending Mitaa meetings? Give reasons.
25. Are there specific groups of people (youth, adults and elderlies) who are less likely to participate to Mitaa meetings? Why do you think this is the case?
26. Is Mtaa leadership accountable to the citizens?
27. Are the resolutions of Mitaa meetings implemented? If NO, give reasons.
28. Are there notable changes resulting from Mitaa meetings? Mention at least two changes.
29. Are there negative consequences resulting from failure to conduct Mitaa meetings?
30. Are the ways used to inform citizens about Mitaa meetings sufficient and clear? If not, what improvements would you suggest?
31. Have you ever missed a meeting because you were not aware about it? How could communication be improved?
32. What challenges do citizens face in attending these meetings?
33. Do you feel that the concerns and opinions of citizens are taken seriously in Mitaa meetings?
34. Are there any cultural or social norms that affect citizen participation in Mitaa meetings?
35. Are you aware of any initiatives or efforts by the local government to encourage more citizen participation in Mitaa meetings? How effective do you think these efforts have been? Can you provide examples of any successful initiatives?
36. What changes or improvements would you suggest to increase citizen participation in Mitaa meetings?
37. Do the use of information, communication and technology such as SMS, websites, emails, social media networks and mobile applications can improve citizen participation in Mitaa meetings?

38. Can partnership between local government authorities (LGAs), civil society organisations (CSOs), and private sector be leveraged to improve citizen participation in Mitaa meetings?
39. Do you think citizens need more training or information to effectively participate in Mitaa meetings? If Yes, What type of capacity-building programs or resources would be helpful?
40. How should the outcomes of Mitaa meetings be communicated to citizens?
41. What mechanisms could be put in place to ensure that citizen feedback is acted upon?
42. Is there anything else you would like to add or suggest regarding citizen participation in Mitaa meetings?

Thank you very much for your time, cooperation, and opinion.

MWONGOZO WA USAILI/HOJAJI

Utangulizi/Utambulisho

Mimi naitwa **Goodluck Justine** ni mwanafunzi wa Chuo Kikuu Huria cha Tanzania (OUT). Ninasomo Shahada ya Uzamili katika Utawala na Uongozi (MAGL). Kwa sasa nipo katika hatua ya mwisho ya kumaliza masomo yangu na kwa mujibu wa utaratibu wa Chuo Kikuu. Katika hatua hii, kila mwanafunzi anapaswa kufanya utafiti katika mada aliyoichangua na inayoendana na kozi yake. Kwa msingi huu, nipo katika eneo lako kwa ajili ya kufanya utafiti unaohusu "***Vigezo Vinavyoathiri Ushiriki wa Wananchi katika Mikutano ya Mitaa Nchini Tanzania: Uzoefu Kutoka Halmashauri ya Manispaa ya Ubungo***". Naomba unipe muda na ushirikiano wako katika usaili/mahojiano haya ambayo ndio msingi wa kupata taarifa kukamilisha utafiti wangu kama mwanafunzi. Taarifa zote utakazotoa zitatumika kwa mahitaji ya utafiti huu tu.

Naomba ridhaa yako sasa ili tuanze zoezi la usaili huu.

Taarifa Mshiriki/Interviewee:

i. **Cheo/Nafasi ya Mshiriki katika Jamii: _____**
ii. **Jinsia: _____**
iii. **Mahali Anapoishi (Mtaa au Kata):_____**
iv. **Ameishi hapo tangu lini na kwa muda gani :_____**
v. **Umri: 18-25 ( ) , 26-35 ( ), 36-45 ( ), 46-55 ( ), 56-65 ( ), 66+ ( )**

SEHEMU YA KWANZA: UELEWA KUHUSU MIKUTANO YA MITAA

1. Je, unafahamu wowote kuhusu Mikutano ya Mitaa?_____
2. Ni watu wenye sifa zipi wanapaswa kuhudhuria kwenye Mkutano wa Mtaa?_____
3. Unaelewa madhumuni ya Mikutano ya Mitaa?_____ kama ndiyo taja dhumuni lolote unalolifahamu_____
4. Ni agenda au masuala gani yanajadiliwa kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?

   _____

5. Unafikiri Mikutano ya Mitaa inapaswa kuitishwa kila baada ya muda gani?

   _____

6. Mikutano ya Mitaa inapaswa kufanyika sehemu gani?_____
7. Ni, jukumu la nani kuitisha Mikutano ya Mitaa?_____
8. Je, kuna ulazima wa kuitisha Mikutano ya Mitaa?_____
9. Je, Mikutano ya Mitaa isipoitishwa kuna hatua zozote za kisheria zinapaswa kuchukuliwa?_____kwa mfano hatua zipi?

   _____
   _____

10. Mikutano ya Mitaa isipoitishwa kuna madhara yoyote hasi?_____ kwa mfano madhara yapi?

    _____
    _____

SEHEMU YA PILI: MAHUDHURIO NA USHIRIKI KWENYE MIKUTANO YA MITAA

1. Je, umeshawahi kuhudhuria kwenye Mikutano wowote wa Mtaa? _____Kama ndiyo, lini_____na mara ngapi kwa mwaka huu (2024)_____
2. Ulipataje taarifa kuhusu uwepo wa Mkutano huo?
   _____
3. Nini kilikuvutia/kulikuhamasisha kuhudhuria kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?

_____

4. Je, wananchi wengi wanahudhuria kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?_____
5. Ni masuala gani yalijadiliwa kwenye Mkutano wa mwisho uliohudhuria?_____
6. Je, wananchi walipewa nafasi ya kutoa maoni yao, kuuliza maswali au kupitisha maazimio ya Mkutano huo?_____

SEHEMU YA TATU: MITAZAMO KUHUSU MIKUTANO YA MITAA

1. Una mtazamo gani kuhusu Mikutano ya Mitaa, Je, ina umuhimu wowote kwa jamii?_____
2. Unaonaje maandalizi ya Mikutano ya Mitaa?_____
3. Unaweza kueleza uzoefu wowote (hasi au chanya) ulioupata kupitia Mikutano ya Mitaa_____?

SEHEMU YA NNE: UBORA WA MIKUTANO YA MITAA

1. Je, unaamini Mikutano ya Mitaa inaweza kuleta mabadiliko halisi kwenye jamii yako?_____Kama ndiyo, taja angalau mabadiliko mawili_____
2. Je, unaonaje kiwango cha ushiriki na ushirikishwaji wa wanajamii kwenye Mikutano? Je wanajamii wengi wanashiriki kwenye Mikutano?
   _____
   _____

SEHEMU YA TANO: SABABU ZA USHIRIKI MDOGO WA WANANCHI KWENYE MIKUTANO YA MITAA

1. Kwa maoni na uzoefu wako, ni nini kinasabisha wananchi wasihudhurie kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?
   _____
   _____
   _____

_____
_____
_____

2. Je, makundi ya wanajamii (rika) wasiopenda kuhudhuria kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?_____ Ni kundi lipi_____ na sababu ni
zipi?_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Je, ajira/ratiba za kazi, majukumu ya kifamilia na shughuli binafsi zinaweza kuathiri ushiriki wa wananchi kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?_____

ix. Elezea_____
_____
_____

SEHEMU YA SITA: UHAMASISHAJI NA TAARIFA KUHUSU MIKUTANO

1. Je, wananchi wanapaje taarifa au matangazo kuhusu ratiba ya Mikutano ya Mitaa?
_____

2. Je, matangazo yanayotolewa kuhusu Mikutano ya Mitaa yanajitosheleza na yanaeleweka? _____kama hapana, nini kiboreshwe?
_____
_____
_____

3. Je, umewahi kukosa kuhudhuria kwenye Mikutano kwa sababu ya kutopata taarifa?_____kama ndiyo, unafikiri ni njia gani bora ya kutoa matangazo ili iwafikie watu wengi zaidi?

x. _____

SEHEMU YA SABA: KUFIKIKA NA URAHISI WA WANANCHI KUHUDHURIA KWENYE MIKUTANO YA MITAA

1. Je, muda wa Mikutano na mahali inapofanyika ni rafiki na inafikika kwa urahisi na wananchi wengi?

xi. _____
_____

_____
_____

2. Je, wananchi wanakabiliwa na changamoto au vikwazo gani katika kuhudhuria Mikutano ya Mitaa?

xii. _____
_____
_____
_____

3. Ni kwa namna gani usafiri au mahali pa kufanyia Mkutano wa Mtaa unaweza kuathiri mahudhurio ya wananchi

xiii. _____
_____
_____
_____

SEHEMU YA NANE: MAADILI YA VIONGOZI NA UWAKILISHI

1. Masuala na maoni ya wananchi yanapewa kipaumbele kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?_____
2. Una imani na utendaji kazi wa viongozi wa Mtaa?_____
3. Kuna mfano wowote halisi kuhusu mapendekezo ya wananchi yaliyofanyiwa kazi na yakaleta mabadiliko chanya kwenye Mtaa wako?

xiv. _____
____

SEHEMU YA TISA: MASUALA YA KIJAMII NA KIUTAMADUNI

1. Je, kuna masuala ya kijamii na kiutamaduni yanayoathiri ushiriki wa wananchi kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?_____kama ndiyo eleza

xv. _____
_____
_____

2. Ni kwa namna gani, jinsia, umri, hali ya kijamii au kiuchumi inaweza kuathiri ushiriki kwenye Mikutano ya Mtaa?

xvi. _____
_____
_____
_____

SEHEMU YA KUMI: JITIHADA ZA KUBORESHA USHIRIKI WA WANANCHI KWENYE MIKUTANO YA MITAA

1. Unatambua jitihada zozote za Serikali za Mitaa za kuhamasisha ushiri wa wananchi kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Jitihada hizo zinaleta matokeo tarajiwa?

_____
_____
_____

3. Unaweza kutaja jitihada zozote zilizoleta matokeo chanya?

_____
_____
__

SEHEMU YA KUMI NA MOJA: MAPENDEKEZO YA KUBORESHA USHIRIKI WA WANANCH KWENYE MIKUTANO YA MITAA

1. Unafiki ni mabadiliko au maboresho gani yakifanyika yanaweza kuongeza ushiriki wa wananchi kwenye Mikutao ya Mitaa?

_____
_____
_____

2. Ni mbinu au mikakati gani inaweza kuongeza ushiriki wa wananchi kwenye Mikutano?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Ni kwa namna gani muundo na mfumo wa Mkutano unaweza kuboreshwa ili kuongeza ushiriki wa wananchi kwenye Mikutano?

_____
_____
_____

SEHEMU YA KUMI NA MBILI: NAFASI YA VIONGOZI WA JAMII KATIKA KUBORESHA USHIRI WA WANANCHI KWENYE MIKUTANO YA MITAA.

1. Eleza ni kwa namna gani viongozi wa jamii na mashirika/vikundi vya kijamii vinaweza kuongeza ushiriki wa wananchi kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa.

_____
_____
_____
___

2. Je, unafiki matumizi ya teknolojia ya habari na mawasiliano (TEHAMA) kama vile meseji, barua pepe, tovuti, whatsapp na mitandao ya kijamii yanaweza kuongeza ushiriki wa wananchi kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?

_____
_____
_____

3. Ushirikiano kati ya serikali za mitaa, asasi za kiraia na sekta binafsi unaweza kutumikaje kwa ajili ya kuboresha ushiriki wa wananchi kwenye Mikutano ya
Mitaa?_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

SEHEMU YA KUMI NA TATU: KUONGEZA UELEWA WA WANANCHI KUHUSU MIKUTANO YA MITAA.

1. Je, unafiki wananchi wanahitaji kujengewa uelewa zaidi kuhusu umuhimu wa kushiriki kwenye Mikutano ya
Mitaa?_____
2. Je, ni aina gani ya elimu inayopaswa kutolewa ili kuongeza ushiriki wa wananchi kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?

_____
_____

SEHEMU YA KUMI NA NNE: MREJESHO NA UFUAJILIAJI KUHUSU MIKUTANO YA MITAA.

1. Je, ni namna ipi bora ya kuwasilisha maazimio au matokeo ya Mikutano ya Mitaa kwa wanajamii?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Ni unafiki ni mfumo gani uwekwe ili kuhakikisha mrejesho wa wananchi unafanyiwa kazi?

_____
_____
_____
__

MWISHO

1. Je, una kitu chochote ambacho ungependa kukiongeza kuhusu ushiriki wa wananchi kwenye Mikutano ya Mitaa?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Je, una maoni au mapendekezo yoyote kuhusu utafiti huu?

_____
_____
_____
_____

AHSANTE SANA KWA MUDA, USHIRIKI NA MAONI YAKO.

RESEARCH CLEARANCE LETTER

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

Ref. No OUT/PG201901854 **7th June, 2024**

Municipal Director,
Ubungo Municipal Council,

P.O Box 55068,
DAR ES SALAAM.

Dear Director,

RE: RESEARCH CLEARANCE FOR MR. GOODLUCK JUSTINE REG NO: PG201901854

2. The Open University of Tanzania was established by an Act of Parliament No. 17 of 1992, which became operational on the 1st March 1993 by public notice No.55 in the official Gazette. The Act was however replaced by the Open University of Tanzania Charter of 2005, which became operational on 1st January 2007.In line with the Charter, the Open University of Tanzania mission is to generate and apply knowledge through research.

3. To facilitate and to simplify research process therefore, the act empowers the Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania to issue research clearance, on behalf of the Government of Tanzania and

Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology, to both its staff and students who are doing research in Tanzania. With this brief background, the purpose of this letter is to introduce to you **Mr. Goodluck Justine**, **Reg.No: (PG201901854),** pursuing **Master of Arts in Governance and Leadership(MAGL).** We here by grant this clearance to conduct a research titled **"Factors**

Affecting Citizen Participation in Mitaa Meetings Incorporated in Local Government Authorities: Ubungo Municipal Council. He will collect his data at your area from 10th June to 30th July 2024.

4. In case you need any further information, kindly do not hesitate to contact theDeputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) of the Open University of Tanzania, P.O.Box 23409, Dar es Salaam. Tel: 022-2-2668820.We lastly thank you in advance for your assumed cooperation and facilitation of this research academic activity.

Yours sincerely,

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

Prof.Gwahula Raphael Kimamala
For*:* VICE CHANCELLOR

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE,
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

UBUNGO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

In reply please quote:

Ref: No. EA. AB.94/216/02/277 **Date:13th June, 2024**

GOODLUCK JUSTINE,
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA.

RE: **PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA**

Refer to the above heading.

2. I am pleased to inform you that your above request has been considered by the Municipal Director, and has offered you a place to collect data concerning **"FACTORS AFFECTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN MITAA MEETINGS INCORPORATED IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: UBUNGO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL".** From 10th June, 2024 to 30th July, 2024".

3. Upon receipt of this letter, please report to the **Ward Executive Officer's – Goba, Mbezi, Kimara, Sinza na Manzese** for the commencement of your data collection.

4. During the period of data collection, you are required to obey the rules and regulations of the institution.

5. Yours Sincerely.

For: M
UBUN
DI

L DIRECTOR
IPAL COUNCIL
AM

Victoria C. Wihenge
For: **THE MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR**
UBUNGO

All correspondence to be addressed to the Municipal Director. Luguruni, Morogoro Road, P.O. Box: 55068, Dar es Salaam, For more communication please contact us with Phone no: 0222-926341, Fax No: 0222-926342, Website: www.ubungomc.go.tz, Email: info@ubungomc.go.tz