



Factors Influencing the Adoption of E-participation at the Local Level in Tanzania

By Hubert Shija

Key Messages

- Council websites are highly informative, but most information is not relevant for Lower Local Government (LLG) level.
- There is limited consultation with citizens via their Internet applications and consideration of the online views of citizens.
- The overall adoption of e-participation at the local level is in its infancy.

Introduction

The internet increases citizen engagement and has become a useful tool and medium for engagement in many countries, including Tanzania. The number of mobile phone subscribers and Internet users in Tanzania has increased in the period 2010-2022 from 15.6 million and 500,000 in the former and the latter to 56 million and 29 million respectively. The Government of Tanzania has sought to guide the development and adoption of ICT by, among others, enacting the National ICT Policy. Tanzania has also strengthened the institutional framework by establishing technical standards and guidelines such as e-government and websites of the Government guidelines. Policy implementation has seen the establishment of an e-Government Authority to coordinate effective, efficient, and secure utilisation of ICT in Government administration.

However, despite rapid growth in the adoption of ICT around the world, including Tanzania, there has been limited research on how ICT influences democratisation. In response to this knowledge gap, the factors influencing the adoption of e-participation at the local government level in Tanzania are examined.

Methodology

A mixed methods approach was employed to collect data in Dar es Salaam City Council (CC), Mwanza CC, Kinondoni Municipal Council (MC) in Dar es Salaam and Ilemela MC in Mwanza. Content analysis, a survey, and an interview were used to collect data from October to November 2021. Councils and Central Government officials were selected purposively, while citizens were sampled using purposive and stratified random selection techniques. Similarly, the data were analysed quantitatively, and qualitatively.

Results

The findings cover the degree of availability and utilisation of government e-information, interaction, and consultation with citizens via the Internet, and considerations of citizens' online views. They also revealed the factors influencing the adoption.

Availability of Information on Councils' Websites and Social Media Pages

Analysis revealed that all four councils published information on their websites and social media pages to varying degrees (see Table 1). Information means frequently asked questions (FAQs), news, implementation reports, budgets,

strategic plans, procurement results, by-laws, statistics, programmes, calendars, notices, projects, municipal profiles, and annual work plans. Moreover, to some extent, some information was downloadable. Again, to a great extent, councils provided information via their websites, while to a lesser extent via their social media pages. However, they used them to stream councils' deliberations live, supplement and direct people to their websites.

Table 1. Score of Councils Providing Information via Their Websites

| Local Government Authority | % |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Dar es Salaam City Council | 73 |
| Ilemela Municipal Council | 40 |
| Kinondoni Municipal Council | 87 |
| Mwanza City Council | 73 |

Despite publishing so much information online, some councils shared some of it inaccurately because of poor coordination between the communication unit and other council units. Also, some information on some councils' websites was not updated regularly.

"We have the website, but I admit that the information which is on the website is not up to date. The responsible staff are not doing their job; that is, they do not update it daily." (Participant C2)

Also, lots of information was not very relevant because specific Wards and Mitaa affairs were excluded. For instance, three councils did not have Wards and Mitaa web pages, while one did but displayed only Ward profiles.

The reasons for such a degree of information provision were as follows. First, there was a shortage of communication staff. Second, Mitaa leaders were not aware of the practice. Next, the lack of electricity, ICT infrastructure, Internet connectivity, and good Internet connectivity in some Mitaa offices. Similarly, some Mitaa elected political leaders did not possess ICT skills, and some councils' staff did not follow the guidelines for the councils websites. Finally, the government

restricted the use of third-party social media pages on the government ICT networks to ensure national security.

Utilisation of Information on Council Websites and Social Media Pages

Focusing on citizens, a few respondents used such media to get information from the councils. Of these, a few used it to hold councils accountable. The factors which influenced the utilisation were a lack of awareness, unaffordable ICT devices and internet bundles, and a lack of internet skills. Also, a low level of formal education, poor reading culture, poor internet connectivity in some areas, and textual information influenced the utilisation. Similarly, a lack of some relevant information on some councils' websites and social media, a lack of online information access promotion, and irregular information update also affected the utilisation.

Interaction and Consultation with Citizens on Council Internet Applications

Obviously, some Internet applications like social media facilitate online interaction and consultation. The councils had only social media pages (see Table 2). They did not adopt even the government-owned consultation tool (<https://edodoso.gov.go.tz>). Councils posted information on their pages and citizens reacted to it (see Table 3). Despite having social media pages, the councils did not consult citizens online for various reasons as follows. First, many people were apathetic. Second, some citizens feared surveillance. Furthermore, some councils were too conservative to consult citizens online. Finally, all factors which influenced the online provision and utilisation of information also influenced the online interaction and consultation.

Table 2. Presence of Interaction, Consultation, and Decision-Making Tools on Councils' Websites

| Interaction/consultation/decision-making tool | No. of councils |
|---|-----------------|
| <i>Non-social media</i> | |
| Complaints/ feedback form/ submission form | 4 |
| Forum | 0 |

| Interaction/ decision-making tool | consultation/ decision-making tool | No. of councils | Interaction/ decision-making tool | consultation/ decision-making tool | No. of councils |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Petition | | 0 | Blog | | 1 |
| Poll | | 0 | Facebook page | | 4 |
| Referendum | | 0 | Instagram account | | 2 |
| Survey | | 0 | Twitter account | | 2 |
| Social media | | 0 | YouTube channel | | 2 |

Table 3. Rankings of Councils in Social Media Page Interactions since Sign-up

| Local Authority | Government Posts | Followers | Following | Viewing | Likes | % |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|-------|-----|
| Dar es Salaam City Council | 18 | 3,027 | - | 291 | 64 | 1 |
| Ilemela Municipal Council | 720 | 7,582 | 265 | NA | 344 | 6 |
| Kinondoni Municipal Council | 388 | 6,035 | 877 | 7,892 | 5,445 | 92 |
| Mwanza City Council | 3 | 69 | - | NA | 63 | 1 |
| Total | 1,129 | 16,713 | 1,142 | 8,183 | 5,916 | 100 |

Note. NA stands for Not Applicable.

Consideration of Citizens' Views Received via Council Internet Applications

Consideration of the online views of people completes citizen engagement. To some extent, some councils considered the online views. Also, such online views were feedback and comments as the Council official asserted:

"We use their feedback and comments to improve service delivery in our council. Consequently, citizens' online views partly affect the decision-making processes." (Participant D1)

As Table 4 shows, some councils also informed citizens whether their online views were considered and provided reasons for either of the two outcomes.

Table 4. Respondents' Opinion on Consideration of Online Views and Receiving Feedback

| Category | Statement (%) | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Views considered | not Informed the outcome | on Outcome reason given |
| Strongly agree | 8 | 9 | 8 |
| Agree | 16 | 12 | 4 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 48 | 39 | 43 |
| Disagree | 21 | 24 | 29 |
| Strongly disagree | 7 | 15 | 15 |

Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite the government's efforts to adopt e-participation at the local level, adoption is still in the early stages, especially at Lower Local Government (LLG) level. However, to a greater extent, councils complied with the Government website guidelines although the guidelines do not include the provision of information below the district level. The main factor is that the enabling environment is not sufficient to support the adoption of e-participation at the local level. A firm political will and strengthened decentralization are required to increase the rate of e-participation adoption at the local level in Tanzania.

Specific recommendations are, first, the Central Government should increase the speed of establishing a conducive ICT environment across the country, to expand the provision of information below the district level, to prepare and share widely within the government e-consultation and e-decision-making guidelines, and to promote government-owned online participation tools like 'e-dodoso'. Second the Local Government Authorities should connect all LLG level offices with electricity and ICT infrastructure, and conduct regular ICT training programmes for Local Government officials and elected political leaders, to make it possible to use government-owned e-consultation features such as the e-dodoso to engage citizens. Finally, citizens need to acquire and improve their ICT skills using different approaches such as attending formal short courses and self-learning.

Bibliography

Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania. (2018). *Mwongozo wa kuendesha tovuti za mikoa na mamlaka ya serikali za mitaa*. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Jamhuri Ya Muungano wa Tanzania.

United Nations. (2022). E-government survey 2022: The future of digital government. New York, NY. Retrieved from <https://desapublications.un.org>

REPOA Resource Centre

Our Resource Centre provides a good environment for literature research, quicker, easier access and use of knowledge and information. It has full internet connection for online library to support Master & PhD candidates, researchers and academicians with free access to latest journals, books, reports, webcasts, etc.

Opening Hours

Tuesday to Thursday from 10:00am to 1:00pm, 2:00pm to 05:00pm.

Friday 10:00am - 01:00pm

The online library opens 24 hours



REPOA HQs

157 Migombani/REPOA streets, Regent Estate, PO Box 33223,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Tel: +255 (22) 2700083 Cell: +255 78 455 5655

Website: <https://www.repoa.or.tz>

Email: repoa@repoa.or.tz

Branch Office

2nd Floor Kilimo Kwanza Building
41105 Makole East, Kisasa,
Dodoma, Tanzania

@REPOA 2024

Findings and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of REPOA and any of her partners.