



Civic Education and Citizen Participation in Local Governance: A Case of Lusaka District, Zambia

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ABSTRACT:

Citizen participation in local governance refers to the involvement of community members in decision-making processes, policy formulation, and implementation at the local level. It embodies the principle of democracy by giving residents a voice in matters that directly affect their lives and communities. Hence, the study focused on the effect of civic education on citizen participation in matters that affects their society especially matters to do with local governance. Specifically, the study explored the process of citizen participation in local governance, identified the levels of citizen participation in local governance, challenges that hinder active citizen participation in local governance and identify the means of enhancing the citizen participation in local governance. The study population included general citizens, civic teachers and non-civic teachers, Counselors and the council secretary in Lusaka district. A sample composed of 95 respondents who were selected using purposive and simple random sampling technique. Interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data. This study used descriptive analysis to analyze the data. Qualitative and Quantitative techniques of data analysis were used, and data was presented on the analytical tools such as tables, figures and charts. The study indicated that civic education has an effect on citizen involvement and participation in local governance. One thing to note is that the civic knowledge enables citizens to make sound decisions towards their civic rights, which helps them know their roles in governance systems. Furthermore, the study reviewed that when there is lack of civic education at all levels citizen involvement in local governance cannot be there because citizens are not empowered. The study therefore recommended that civic education should be provided at all levels starting from junior secondary school to community levels so that citizens are empowered.

Keywords: Civic Education, Citizen Participation, Community Engagement, Democratic Values, and Local Governance.

INTRODUCTION :

Education is the key to the doors of success for most of people in Africa and the world at large. Without education people cannot productively, care for their health, sustainability and protect themselves. Therefore, the quality of civic education has been a concern of those interested in the health of our system of government and the well-being of the citizenry (Chanda, 2023). It can be noted that civic education programs provide detailed instruction to ordinary citizens about democratic institutions, values, and procedures. They include voter education programs, programs that provide instruction about the social and political rights of women, neighborhood problem-solving programs that bring individuals in contact with local authorities and promote local collective action, programs combatting election violence and vote-buying, and programs promoting tolerance and the peaceful resolution of political disputes in post-conflict settings. One effort made by the Zambian government was the introduction of civic education in the school curriculum. The reason for the inclusion of civic education to the Zambian curriculum was part of the decisions that the Zambian government made after the attainment of independence in 1964 (Afronet, 2002). After the attainment of independence, the Zambia Government through the Ministry of education made all possible efforts to become a democratic state. These efforts were realized when the country adapted democratic principles and people began to elect their own leaders. It is obvious that democracy cannot be achieved in the absence of citizen participation. And what better way to create active citizenship than through civic education. Creating an active and participatory citizen is instrumental in the flourishing of democracy.

Chanda (2023) narrates that civic education means all the processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of communities. Civic education (also known as citizen education or democracy education) can be broadly defined as the provision of information and learning experiences to equip and empower citizens to participate in democratic processes. Active citizenship in this sense is the ability of the people "to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in the society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life" (Deth, 2013). It is obvious that democracy cannot be achieved in the absence of civic education in the country. The promotion of democracy should be accompanied by massive civic education for the citizens of every nation. For example, Democracies in Europe faced the problem in sustaining themselves. As a remedy, all the democracies have been convinced of the importance of having active and informed citizens who will

sustain democracy. The relationship between civic education and citizen involvement in local governance has become recently a key topic of research in many civil society organizations and the government in particular. The involvement of citizens in local governance and political process is an essential part of democracy. Tactics and strategies for increased citizen participation in local governance can be seen around the globe. For example, in the municipality of Nejapa, El Salvador, the municipal government partnered with local NGOs and sought to increase public involvement in local politics, resulting in huge increases in access to potable water, latrines, and electricity for its residents. In India, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) has been deeply involved in a collective process which has shaped and influenced the Campaign for the Right to Information in India. MKSS makes the case that without access to civic education there can be no genuine participation of all members of society, particularly the poor, in democracy.

In democratic societies, citizen participation in local governance plays a crucial role in ensuring accountability, transparency, and the effective delivery of public services (De Brito, 2010). Civic education serves as a cornerstone in nurturing informed and engaged citizens who actively contribute to their communities' decision-making processes. This paper delves into the significance of civic education in enhancing citizen participation in local governance, exploring its effects on civic awareness, empowerment, and democratic values. Civic education encompasses various initiatives aimed at educating individuals about their rights, responsibilities, and the mechanisms of democratic governance. It equips citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage meaningfully in local decision-making processes. Through formal education curricula, community programs, and media campaigns, civic education fosters an understanding of government structures, electoral processes, and the importance of civic duties.

Chanda (2023) points out that civic knowledge is concerned with the content or what citizens ought to know; the subject matter. The second essential component of civic education in a democratic society is civic skills. If citizens are to exercise their rights and discharge their responsibilities as members of self-governing communities, they not only need to acquire a body of knowledge such as that embodied in the five organizing questions just described; they also need to acquire relevant intellectual and participatory skills. Intellectual skills in civics and government are inseparable from content. To be able to think critically about a political issue, for example, one must have an understanding of the issue, its history, its contemporary relevance, as well as command of a set of intellectual tools or considerations useful in dealing with such an issue. Mhango (2008) says that the intellectual skills essential for informed, effective, and responsible citizenship sometimes are called critical thinking skills.

Civic Education, also known as citizenship education, facilitates the development of the knowledge, understanding, social skills, disposition, virtues and values that personally fulfil individuals and render them socially constructive citizens (Chanda, 2023). Effective civic education programs raise citizens' awareness of local governance issues and institutions. By educating individuals about their rights, the functions of local government bodies, and the avenues for participation, civic education empowers citizens to engage more meaningfully in community affairs. An informed citizenry is better equipped to scrutinize government policies, hold elected officials accountable, and advocate for change in their communities. Civic education goes beyond imparting knowledge; it cultivates a culture of active citizenship and participation (Marshal, 1950). By encouraging dialogue, debate, and collaboration, civic education fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens towards local governance processes. It empowers individuals to voice their concerns, participate in public meetings, and volunteer for community initiatives. As citizens become more engaged, local governments benefit from diverse perspectives and grassroots input, leading to more inclusive and responsive decision-making.

At its core, civic education promotes democratic values such as tolerance, respect for diversity, and civic responsibility. By instilling these values in citizens from a young age, civic education contributes to the development of a cohesive and inclusive society. Citizens who have undergone civic education are more likely to respect the rule of law, uphold human rights, and participate in peaceful civic action. Thus, civic education not only strengthens democratic institutions but also nurtures a sense of belonging and solidarity within communities (Mapuva, 2013). Despite its importance, civic education faces several challenges, including inadequate funding, limited access to educational resources, and political polarization. To address these challenges, policymakers and stakeholders must prioritize civic education initiatives, allocate sufficient resources, and ensure inclusive and accessible educational opportunities for all citizens. Furthermore, partnerships between governments, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the media can enhance the reach and effectiveness of civic education programs. Civic education plays a pivotal role in promoting citizen participation in local governance by empowering individuals, fostering civic engagement, and nurturing democratic values. By investing in civic education initiatives, societies can cultivate informed, active, and responsible citizens who contribute positively to their communities' development and well-being. Thus, recognizing the importance of civic education is essential for building vibrant, democratic societies where citizens actively participate in shaping their collective future.

The concept of involvement has received considerable emphasis in the development discourse, in the context of including peoples' voices in decision-making processes. As stated above, recent times have seen many states creating greater opportunities for citizens to dialogue and debate in policy making. However, the capacity of the states to respond to greater citizens' participation is debatable. The voices of the poor or the marginalized are also often not those that are heard in the state supported means of participation. Involvement of the marginalized could take on other forms, such as choosing to join a social movement rather than becoming part of a consultative process. For example, in fact in South Africa there has been a culture of public protests resulting from the inability of citizens to participate in decisions that affect their lives (Finkel 2000). Citizen involvement in local governance can happen through various means such as state forums, legislations, NGOs, social movements and non-formal forms of citizen action are significant as they symbolize the transition from representative democracy to participatory democracy. It is evident that new spaces and opportunities have been emerging for citizen engagement in governance at all levels, especially that of local governance. These are being developed and promoted through policy instruments, legal frameworks and support programs. However, it is also not clear whether such elements have led to parental engagement or help in strengthening local governance in Zambia. Hence it was hoped that the study would help to determine the effect of civic education on citizen involvement in local governance.

Statement of the Problem :

In contemporary democracies, citizen participation in local governance is vital for ensuring the accountability, responsiveness, and effectiveness of government institutions. Local governance structures serve as the frontline for addressing community needs and concerns, making it imperative for citizens to actively engage in decision-making processes Afronet (2002). Civic education, aimed at informing and empowering individuals about their rights, responsibilities, and the functioning of democratic systems, is often considered a fundamental tool for enhancing citizen participation in local governance. However, despite its potential benefits, there remain significant challenges and gaps in understanding the extent to which civic education influences citizen participation in local governance. This statement of the problem aims to identify and analyze these challenges, providing insights into areas for further research and policy intervention. Holdar (2002) observed that one of the primary challenges in understanding the effect of civic education on citizen participation in local governance is the absence of comprehensive assessment frameworks for civic education programs. While various initiatives exist at the local, national, and international levels to promote civic education, there is limited systematic evaluation of their impact on citizen engagement in local governance processes. Without robust assessment mechanisms, it becomes difficult to measure the effectiveness of civic education interventions and identify best practices for enhancing citizen participation.

Another significant challenge is the unequal access to civic education resources, particularly among marginalized communities. Kaumba (2015) added that socioeconomic factors, geographic location, and educational disparities often contribute to unequal access to civic education programs and materials. Consequently, certain segments of the population, such as low-income individuals, minorities, and rural residents, may be less informed and less engaged in local governance processes. Addressing these disparities requires targeted efforts to ensure equitable access to civic education resources and opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their background or circumstances. Although civic education is recognized as a vital component of democratic citizenship, its integration into formal education curricula remains inconsistent and inadequate in many jurisdictions. Schools play a critical role in shaping young people's understanding of civic rights and responsibilities, yet civic education often receives minimal attention or is confined to isolated modules within broader subjects. As a result, many students graduate without a comprehensive understanding of local governance structures, democratic principles, and avenues for civic participation, undermining their capacity to engage meaningfully in community affairs.

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of civic education on citizen participation in local governance in a case of Lusaka district in Zambia.

1.4. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Assess the effect of civic education on citizen participation in local governance in Lusaka district, Zambia.
- Determine factors that hinder citizen participation in local governance in Lusaka district, Zambia.
- Evaluate the strategies put in place for civic education to enhance citizen participation in local governance Lusaka district, Zambia.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Empowerment theory which suggests that civic education empowers citizens by providing them with knowledge and skills to participate effectively in local governance (Cheema, 2017). Civic education can empower citizens by teaching them about the structures and processes of local government, as well as the tools and techniques for advocacy and policy making (Deth, 2013). As a result, citizens who receive civic education are more likely to participate in local governance, and to have a greater impact on policy decisions. Julian Rappaport, a psychologist, developed the concept of "psychological empowerment" in the early 1980s. He argued that psychological empowerment involves individuals feeling competent, confident, and in control of their lives and environments. Empowerment theory emphasizes the importance of providing citizens with knowledge about the structures and processes of local governance. Civic education can provide citizens with a comprehensive understanding of local governance, including the roles and responsibilities of elected officials, the functions of various government agencies, and the mechanisms for citizen participation (Fung, 2006). With this knowledge, citizens can more effectively navigate the complex bureaucracy of local governance and identify opportunities for participation. Empowerment theory also emphasizes the importance of providing citizens with skills and resources to participate effectively in local governance. Civic education can teach citizens how to write letters to elected officials, how to testify at public hearings, and how to organize and advocate for policy changes. These skills are essential for citizens who wish to influence the policy-making process effectively.

1.6. Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of this study would increase knowledge and understanding to the readers and create base for other researchers to develop findings that is useful to enhance active citizen participation in local governance. Enhanced citizen participation promotes transparency and accountability of local leaders hence quality service delivery to the people. It enables citizens to understand their rights and responsibilities, participate in the decision-making process, and hold their elected officials accountable. Thus, the study findings would contribute to improving citizen participation in local governance, which is crucial for the functioning of a democratic society. The study would help identify effective strategies for promoting civic education and citizen participation in local governance. By examining the factors that influence citizen participation and the impact of

civic education programs, policymakers can develop more effective strategies to engage citizens and promote democratic participation. Citizen Participation in local governance can lead to better decision-making and improved service delivery. When citizens are informed and engaged, they can provide valuable input and feedback that can help policymakers make more informed decisions. Therefore, the study would provide insights into the role of civic education in promoting good governance practices. Addressing social and political challenges: Civic education can help address social and political challenges by fostering a sense of district and promoting social cohesion. When citizens are informed and engaged, they are more likely to work together to address common challenges and build stronger communities.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

2.1. Study Design

Descriptive survey design was used in this study. Borg and Gall (1989), states that descriptive study regulates and reports the way things are and generally involves assessing attitudes, opinions towards individuals, organizations and procedures. In this regard, descriptive design was used to find out on civic education and citizen participation: an essential tool in local governance.

2.2. Research Site

This study was conducted in Lusaka district, the capital city of Zambia from which the participants were selected for the study.

2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised community members, civic and non-civic education teachers, ward councilors and the council secretary in Lusaka district giving a total of one thousand nine hundred (1900). The sample size involved a total of 95 respondents which included 75 community members, 5 civic and 10 non civic education teachers from both junior and senior secondary schools, the council secretary and 4 ward councilors. The study used both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants.

2.4. Data Analysis

According to Kothari (2004) data analysis is defined as manipulation of certain measures along with searching for patterns of relationship that exist among data groups. This study used descriptive analysis to analyze the data. Qualitative and Quantitative techniques of data analysis were used, and data was presented on the analytical tools such as tables, figures and charts.

2.5. Ethical Issues

With regard to ethical consideration, permission was sought before the interviews and before giving questionnaires as one of the ethical demands of any research. Informed consent was sought from the respondents before collecting information from them and guaranteed them with security of the information they provided. Furthermore, the main objective of gathering such information was made clear to the respondents. The study avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. In this research, the study was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS :

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

3.1. Effect of Civic Education on Citizen Participation in Local Governance

Data collected from civic and non-civic education teachers including council secretary revealed that people given civic information was at 31.2%, people enlightened on governance was at 18.8%, people understanding their roles in development was at 25%, enables citizens to become more responsible was at 18.8% and promotes citizen enrolment in politics was at 6.2%. Figure 1 below summarizes these findings.

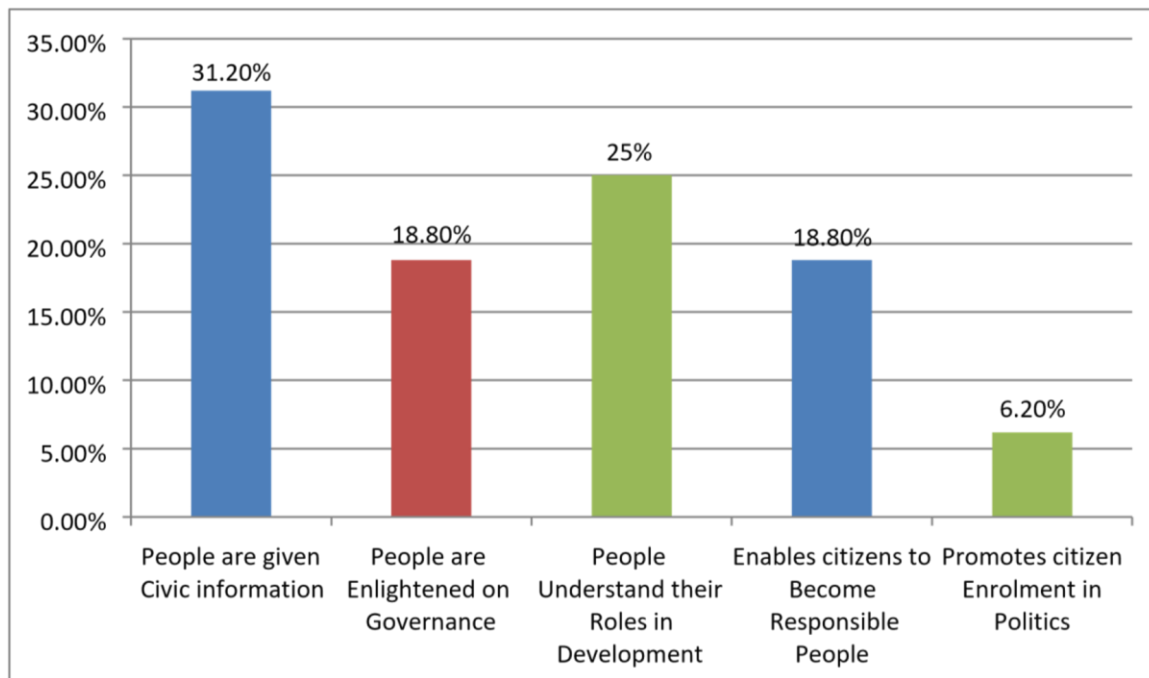


Figure 1: Showing Responses from Civic, Non-civic Education Teachers and the Council Secretary

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the participants were of the view that the provision of civic education had an effect on Citizen Involvement in local governance. In addition, the overall goal of civic education is to promote civic engagement and support democratic and participatory governance. The idea behind civic education is to promote the demand for good governance (i.e. an informed and engaged public), as a necessary complement to efforts to improve the practice of good governance. Civic education has been used to address a wide variety of political and governance issues (e.g. corruption, civic apathy or post-conflict reconciliation) as well as important social issues (e.g. domestic violence, drug abuse, and HIV/AIDS). This is why civic education is an important component of education.

The country case studies reviewed above showed that the nature of the government and the dominant political ideology determine the effectiveness of decentralization and also the design of the citizen engagement activities. In Cameroon, the longstanding conflict has inevitably contributed to the rise of the dominant centralized government and a tendency to recentralize (the dissolution of the two federal regions), rather than strengthen and grant autonomy to decentralized structures. For Kenya, historical marginalization and inequalities, coupled with successive ethnically polarized politics, inevitably culminated in the civil strife of 2007–2008. The creation of the new Constitution (2010) was a process designed to address. One of the studies conducted in line with the effect of civic education on citizen involvement in local governance is that of Niworo et-al (2016) in Ghana. This study explored the effect of Civic education on citizen's political participation in the Sissala East District of the Upper West. Region of Ghana. The study suggests that beneficiaries of civic education in the study area had high level of political participation, including the readiness to vote, join political party, contest elections, participate in district service and demanding accountability from duty bearers.

Effective citizenship needs all citizens and communities to have 'knowledge, skills and a sense of empowerment for them to be involved in local governance. Civic education is one tool that can be used to enlighten people on the importance of their participation in national matters including local governance. If citizens are given knowledge through Civic education, Local people will be sure who is responsible for what, as public services are fragmented and tied to particular departments and institutions. In addition, the study by Peterson (2011) suggests that beneficiaries of civic education in the study area had high level of political participation, including the readiness to vote, join political party, contest elections, participate in district service and demanding accountability from duty bearers. We can say that provision of civic education in schools and in communities helps the young to develop a reasoned commitment to values and principles necessary for the preservation of democracy. Montalvo (2008) narrates that it promotes the values of positive attitudes, rights and obligations, responsibilities like paying tax and voting as well as freedoms. We can say therefore that, in order to enhance citizen involvement in local governance, Civic Education Campaign should be intensified to create awareness both in formal and informal education settings. One way of making sure that civic education is intensified is by extending the campaign to the media, the press, the general public and civil society. This will in turn increase awareness of citizens' rights and duties and thus create an engaging citizenship.

Despite its benefits, civic education faces several challenges that hinder its impact on citizen involvement in local governance. These challenges include inadequate funding, limited resources, and gaps in curriculum implementation. Furthermore, socioeconomic disparities and political apathy pose barriers to equitable civic participation. Alan. (2004). To address these challenges, policymakers and stakeholders must prioritize investments in civic education infrastructure, including teacher training, curriculum development, and community outreach. Collaborative efforts between government agencies, educational institutions, and civil society organizations are essential for expanding access to high-quality civic education programs. Additionally, leveraging technology and digital platforms can enhance the reach and effectiveness of civic education initiatives, particularly among

youth populations. Civic education plays a crucial role in promoting citizen involvement in local governance. By equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for active citizenship, civic education empowers communities to participate effectively in democratic processes. However, addressing challenges such as funding constraints and socioeconomic disparities is critical for maximizing the impact of civic education initiatives. By investing in inclusive and accessible civic education programs, societies can cultivate a culture of civic engagement and strengthen democracy at the local level (De Brito, 2010).

Table 1: Showing Responses from the District Members and Ward Councilors

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Provides civic education	34	43%
Leaders are held accountable	15	19%
People have knowledge on public affairs	20	25.3%
People know their rights	10	12.7%
Total	79	100

Data collected from the district members and ward councilors revealed that 43% are provided with civic education, leaders being held accountable 19%, 25.3% people have knowledge on public affairs and 12.7% of people know their rights. Table 1 above summarizes these findings.

3.2. Factors that Hinder Citizen Participation in Local Governance

Table 2: Showing Factors that Hinder Citizen Participation in Local Governance

RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Lack of awareness	15%
Socio-economic factors	20%
Language and communication barriers	25%
Political exclusion and marginalization	10%
Lack of trust	15%
Fear of retaliation	5%
Inadequate civic infrastructure	10%
Total	100

The findings indicated that lack of awareness was at 15%, socio-economic factors at 20%, language and communication barriers at 25%, political exclusion and marginalization at 10%, lack of trust at 15%, fear of retaliation at 5% and inadequate civic infrastructure at 10%. Table 2 above summarizes the information. From the study findings, it was observed that the lack of awareness significantly hampers citizen participation in local governance, creating barriers to effective democratic processes. When citizens are uninformed about their rights, responsibilities, and the functions of local government, they are less likely to engage in civic activities such as attending meetings, voting in elections, or contributing to public discussions. Devas & Grant (2003) points out that this lack of involvement can lead to decisions being made without proper representation of community needs and preferences, ultimately resulting in policies and initiatives that may not align with the interests of the populace. Moreover, without an informed citizenry, transparency and accountability within local government can be compromised, fostering an environment ripe for corruption or misuse of power. To address this issue, efforts to promote civic education, enhance access to information, and encourage community participation are essential in fostering an empowered and engaged citizenry capable of actively contributing to local governance processes. Additionally, socio-economic factors play a significant role in hindering citizen participation in local governance. Economic disparities often limit access to education and resources, creating barriers for marginalized communities to engage effectively (DP, 2011-2015). Low-income individuals may lack the time, transportation, or information necessary to participate in meetings or decision-making processes. Additionally, disparities in wealth and power can lead to unequal representation, where affluent individuals or corporations hold more influence over local policies and initiatives. Socio-economic inequalities also impact civic engagement by shaping perceptions of efficacy and trust in government institutions. When citizens feel disenfranchised or marginalized, they are less likely to participate actively in local governance processes, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion and disempowerment. Therefore, addressing socio-economic disparities is crucial for fostering inclusive and equitable citizen participation in local governance.

Moving on, the respondents also narrated that language and communication barriers pose significant obstacles to citizen participation in local governance. This was supported by Falade (2014) who explained that in diverse communities, linguistic diversity often leads to exclusionary practices, as not all residents may be proficient in the dominant language used in official government proceedings. This lack of linguistic accessibility limits individuals' ability to understand and engage with local policies, initiatives, and decision-making processes. Furthermore, ineffective communication channels, such as inaccessible websites or insufficient translation services, further exacerbate these barriers, excluding marginalized groups from actively participating in civic affairs. Consequently, the absence of clear communication channels and language accommodations undermines the principles of inclusivity and democratic participation in local governance, perpetuating disparities in representation and decision-making. Addressing these barriers requires implementing inclusive communication strategies, providing language support services, and fostering environments that prioritize linguistic diversity to ensure equitable citizen engagement in local governance processes. Ward councilors observed that Political exclusion and marginalization pose significant barriers to citizen participation in local governance. When certain groups or individuals are systematically marginalized or excluded from decision-making processes, it undermines the principles of democracy and leads to disenfranchisement. These marginalized groups, often comprising minorities, women, the poor, and other vulnerable populations, face numerous obstacles in accessing information, resources, and opportunities to engage meaningfully in local governance. This exclusion perpetuates power imbalances and fosters a sense of alienation and disengagement among citizens (Finkel, 2000). Moreover, it limits the diversity of perspectives and experiences brought to the decision-making table, which can result in policies and initiatives that fail to address the needs and concerns of all community members. Addressing political exclusion and marginalization is therefore essential for fostering inclusive and participatory local governance processes that reflect the interests and aspirations of the entire community.

Furthermore, community members said that the lack of trust significantly hampers citizen participation in local governance, undermining the democratic process and effective decision-making. IDEA (2011) noted that when citizens lack confidence in their local government, they become disengaged and hesitant to participate in civic activities such as voting, attending public meetings, or joining community initiatives. This lack of trust can stem from various factors, including perceptions of corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, or a disconnect between officials and the community they serve. Without trust, citizens may feel their voices are unheard or that their efforts to engage are futile, leading to apathy and reduced involvement in shaping policies and initiatives that directly impact their lives. Rebuilding trust through transparency, accountability, and meaningful engagement efforts is essential to fostering a more robust and inclusive local governance framework where citizens feel empowered to actively participate in decision-making processes. They added that fear of retaliation often serves as a significant barrier to citizen participation in local governance. When individuals fear repercussions for speaking out or taking action against authorities or powerful individuals within their community, they are less likely to engage in civic activities such as attending public meetings, voicing concerns, or participating in grassroots initiatives. This fear can stem from various sources, including concerns about losing employment opportunities, facing social ostracism, experiencing harassment, or even physical harm (Heywood, 1994). Consequently, the reluctance to participate impedes the democratic process by stifling diverse perspectives and hindering the exchange of ideas crucial for effective governance. Overcoming this barrier requires creating safe and inclusive spaces where citizens feel empowered to contribute without fear of reprisal, through measures such as whistleblower protections, transparency in decision-making processes, and fostering a culture of civic engagement that values dissenting opinions.

The study further noted that inadequate civic infrastructure poses significant hurdles to citizen participation in local governance. When basic infrastructural elements such as reliable transportation, accessible public spaces, and functional communication systems are lacking, it becomes challenging for citizens to engage meaningfully in community affairs. This is in line with Kairuki (2014) who says that limited transportation options can prevent individuals from attending meetings or events, effectively excluding them from decision-making processes. Furthermore, inadequate public spaces diminish opportunities for gatherings and discussions essential for civic engagement. Additionally, poor communication infrastructure inhibits the dissemination of information about civic issues and events, further alienating residents from participating in local governance. Addressing these infrastructural deficiencies is crucial for fostering an inclusive and participatory environment where all citizens can actively contribute to shaping their communities.

3.3. Strategies Put in Place for Civic Education to Enhance Citizen Participation in Local Governance

From the study findings, respondents suggested different strategies to enhance citizen participation in local governance. Civic education teachers suggested that accessible information plays a pivotal role in enhancing citizen participation in local governance by democratizing access to vital resources and fostering inclusivity. By ensuring information is readily available and comprehensible, governments can empower citizens to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes. This can involve various strategies such as providing clear and transparent communication channels, utilizing plain language and visual aids to convey complex ideas, and leveraging digital platforms for easy dissemination of information (Lowndes, 2001). Moreover, accessibility extends beyond physical infrastructure to encompass considerations for individuals with diverse needs, including those with disabilities or language barriers. When citizens have access to relevant and understandable information about local governance initiatives, they are better equipped to voice their opinions, hold authorities accountable, and actively contribute to shaping policies that reflect community interests and values. This inclusive approach not only strengthens democracy but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens towards their local government. They further added that language and accessibility play pivotal roles in enhancing citizen participation in local governance. By ensuring that information, communication, and services are available in multiple languages, governments can reach a wider demographic, including minority language speakers and immigrants (Bagenda, 2007). Additionally, utilizing accessible formats such as plain language, easy-to-read materials, audio, and visual aids can empower individuals with diverse abilities to engage meaningfully in the governance process. Moreover, employing inclusive approaches, such as providing sign language interpreters and captioning for public meetings, fosters an environment where all citizens feel valued and understood, thereby encouraging their active involvement in local decision-making processes. Ultimately, embracing language diversity and

accessibility as integral components of governance strategies can lead to more inclusive, representative, and participatory local communities.

Non-civic education teachers also observed that community engagement events serve as a strategic tool to enhance citizen participation in local governance by fostering a sense of belonging and ownership among community members. These events provide platforms for residents to voice their opinions, share concerns, and contribute ideas directly to local decision-making processes. Muriu (2014) adds that by facilitating open dialogue between citizens and government officials, community engagement events promote transparency, accountability, and trust within the community. Moreover, they encourage collaboration and cooperation among diverse stakeholders, leading to more inclusive and informed policy outcomes. Through interactive workshops, town hall meetings, and collaborative projects, these events empower citizens to actively participate in shaping the future of their neighborhoods and cities, ultimately strengthening democratic values and promoting a sense of civic pride and responsibility. The study further discovered that youth engagement serves as a pivotal strategy in bolstering citizen participation within local governance structures. By actively involving young individuals in decision-making processes, local authorities can tap into fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and diverse experiences that contribute to more inclusive and representative governance. Through platforms such as youth councils, forums, and advisory groups, young people are empowered to voice their concerns, advocate for their communities, and shape policies that directly affect their lives. Furthermore, fostering a culture of youth involvement cultivates a sense of ownership and responsibility among younger generations towards their communities, leading to increased civic participation and long-term commitment to local governance initiatives. By leveraging the energy, enthusiasm, and digital literacy of today's youth, local governments can bridge the gap between traditional governance structures and the evolving needs and aspirations of their communities, ultimately fostering a more vibrant and resilient society.

Aside these findings, the ward councilors further alluded that collaborative decision-making serves as a powerful strategy to bolster citizen participation in local governance by fostering inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. By engaging various stakeholders, including residents, community organizations, and government officials, in the decision-making process, it ensures that diverse perspectives are considered and respected. This approach not only promotes a sense of ownership and empowerment among citizens but also cultivates trust in government institutions (Robert, 2003). Through open dialogue and information sharing, collaborative decision-making builds bridges between authorities and the community, leading to more informed and equitable outcomes. Moreover, it encourages the co-creation of solutions tailored to local needs and priorities, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of governance initiatives. UNDP (2012) supported this by analyzing that embracing collaborative decision-making, local governments can harness the collective wisdom and expertise of their constituents to address complex challenges and advance the common good.

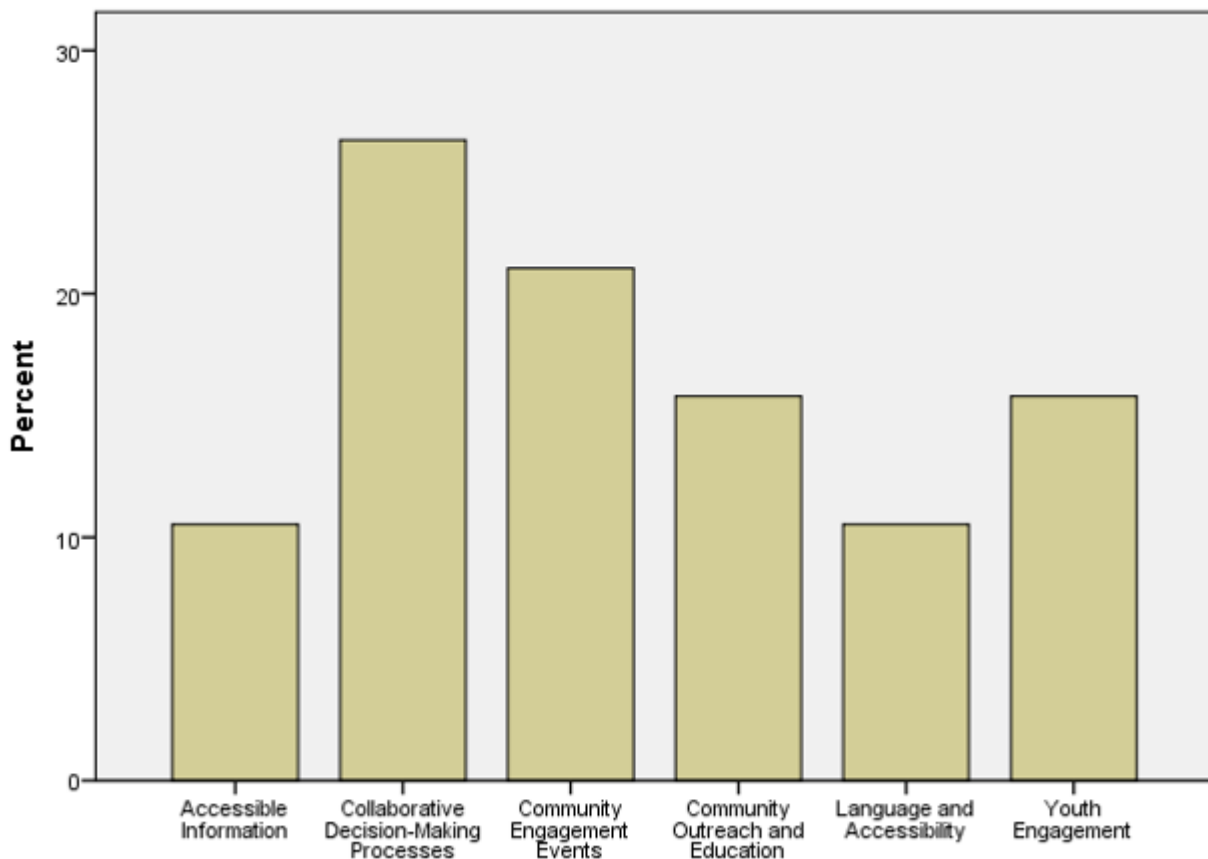


Figure 2: Showing Strategies Put in Place for Civic Education to Enhance Citizen Participation in Local Governance

4. CONCLUSION :

In conclusion, this journal article underscores the indispensable role of civic education in fostering citizen participation in local governance. Through a comprehensive analysis, it elucidates how an informed citizenry is essential for the vitality of democratic processes at the grassroots level. By providing individuals with the knowledge, skills, and awareness necessary to engage meaningfully in their communities, civic education becomes a powerful tool for promoting active citizenship and enhancing the quality of local governance. Moreover, the article highlights the symbiotic relationship between civic education and citizen participation, emphasizing that each reinforces the other in a continuous cycle of empowerment and democratic growth. Ultimately, the findings underscore the imperative for policymakers and educators to prioritize and invest in civic education initiatives as a cornerstone of sustainable and inclusive local governance frameworks.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS :

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- There is a need to integrate civic education into school curricula from an early age to instill an understanding of democratic principles, rights, responsibilities, and the importance of civic engagement.
- There is a need to facilitate community-based learning initiatives such as workshops, seminars, and forums that focus on local governance structures, processes, and issues. These activities should encourage dialogue, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among citizens.
- There is a need to utilize technology platforms, such as online courses, webinars, and social media, to disseminate information and foster discussions on local governance topics. This approach can reach a wider audience and accommodate different learning preferences.
- There is a need to encourage community engagement initiatives, such as town hall meetings, citizen assemblies, or participatory budgeting processes, where citizens can directly contribute to local governance decisions. These platforms promote transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in decision-making.
- There is a need to collaborate with civil society organizations, grassroots movements, and local advocacy groups to amplify civic education efforts and mobilize communities around specific issues or campaigns related to local governance.
- There is a need to ensure that civic education initiatives are accessible and inclusive, particularly for marginalized communities who may face barriers to participation.
- There is a need to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of civic education programs through feedback mechanisms, surveys, and monitoring of citizen engagement levels.

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