The influence of participatory budgeting on public service delivery: A case of Nanyumbu District Council, Mtwara, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of participatory budgeting on public service delivery in Nanyumbu District Council, Mtwara, Tanzania. The study was guided by institutional theory. The target population was 580 people. The research adopted a descriptive research design, with a sample of 237 respondents selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews**,** enabling the researcher to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS**,** while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis**.** The findings revealed that participatory budgeting is transparent and fair, contributing to service delivery outcomes. Furthermore, the data indicated that challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles, lack of awareness, resource limitations, political interference, and low citizen participation hindered the effectiveness of participatory budgeting in Nanyumbu district. The study recommends strengthening civic education, institutionalizing feedback mechanisms, and enhancing technological tools to improve the effectiveness and inclusiveness of participatory budgeting at the local level.

Keywords: Mtwara, Nanyumbu District Council, Participatory Budgeting, Public Service Delivery, Tanzania

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I. INTRODUCTION

A widely acknowledged breakthrough in democratic government and public administration is participatory budgeting (PB). PB was first used in 1989 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, with the goal of directly involving regular people in budget decision-making. The approach gained popularity in other Brazilian towns following initial testing from 1989 to 1995. It then swiftly spread across Latin America and Europe, including France, Germany, Italy, and Spain (Reuben, 2003). By the early 2000s, more than 50 European towns had used the technique; prominent examples include the UK, Poland, and Portugal. International development organizations such as UN-Habitat and the World Bank played a pivotal role in promoting its adoption across Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia, and North America (Reuben, 2003).

Direct citizen participation in governance, especially on budgetary issues, is not a novel idea. According to historical accounts, the Greek city-states, particularly the Ecclesia of Athens, are where participatory decision-making first emerged. Male residents over the age of 18 were permitted to discuss and make decisions on public issues in this early democratic assembly (Schugurensky, 2004). Despite restricting membership to particular groups, medieval European guilds and voluntary societies established the foundation for organized civic engagement early on (World Bank, 2001). According to Arzaluz (2013), the fundamental tenet of participatory budgeting is the belief that all individuals, particularly those affected by public spending, should have a say in the distribution of resources.

In more recent decades, countries across Latin America, particularly those embracing democratic reforms, have increasingly integrated participatory approaches into their budgeting systems. This integration is seen as a hallmark of good governance, enhancing not only transparency and accountability but also social cohesion and public trust (Zolezzi et al., 2019). According to Peters et al. (2020), successful participatory planning depends on shared objectives, clear procedures, and active engagement from both trained public officials and community members.

Nevertheless, the outcomes of participatory budgeting vary significantly across regions. While some cities and municipalities report enhanced service delivery and more democratic governance, others, particularly in Africa, continue to struggle with closed-door budget processes, inadequate reporting mechanisms, and the marginalization of civil society in budget discussions. In these contexts, access to budget information is often limited, weakening accountability and citizen confidence (UN-Habitat, 2004).

In Tanzania, the call for participatory governance has deep historical and political roots. The late President Julius Nyerere emphasized the importance of a democratic local government system that enables citizens to make decisions on matters that directly affect them. This vision was operationalized through the establishment of Ward Development Committees (WDCs), which replaced colonial-era chiefdoms and aimed to place decision-making power in the hands of the people. From 1962 to 1966, Tanzania began formalizing local governance structures, including the creation of the Local Government Service Commission to manage and supervise local staff (Max, 1991).

Today, local government authorities in Tanzania are tasked with supporting peace, order, and good governance through grassroots participation. Budgeting processes typically begin at the community level from the streets and villages, through the WDCs, and ultimately to the district councils. This hierarchical yet participatory system enables citizens to contribute to development planning and resource allocation (Buele et al, 2020).

The rationale for citizen participation in budgeting is grounded in several theoretical frameworks, including democratic engagement, social development, human growth, and economic efficiency (Somech, 2002). These perspectives collectively affirm the value of involving citizens in budget formulation to ensure public spending reflects real community priorities. The salient guided research question remains: 'as to what extent citizens are aware of participation in budget making in local government authorities in Tanzania.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Participatory budgeting has been promoted as a means of achieving public service delivery because it addresses the needs of the poor and vulnerable groups. In Tanzania, this process has been integrated through decentralization by devolution (D-by-D) policy. This local budgeting framework aims to address issues faced by people living in rural areas, especially in villages, by designing community development projects that reflect reality (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2009). Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals aims to promote and provide access to justice for all through local governments. The goal can be achieved by emphasizing participatory budgeting at all levels, allowing citizens to participate in public spending decisions and discuss allocation of funds, and enhancing access to essential public services to citizens (Asukile & Mbogo, 2022).

Malipula (2022) argues that participatory budgeting serves as a budgetary tool to improve collaboration between the government and local communities by strengthening local government capacity by identifying and supporting community initiatives through project development. Moreover, Rugeiyamu (2021) asserts that participatory budgeting may differ in localities and countries depending on the level of context insensitivity, costs of participation, local political culture, limited fiscal autonomy, and knowledge of budget mechanisms.

Moreover, Madaha (2020) argues that participatory budgeting may have unintended consequences, such as the exclusion of community dynamics, especially the majority of rural dwellers in the Global South who are disempowered simply because they cannot perform technical tasks, thereby hindering the equitable realization of benefits, such as equity in public service delivery. Participatory budgeting becomes very effective when local communities have extensive knowledge of the budgeting process and resource allocation, as countries such as Brazil, Central America, Canada, and Germany have successfully implemented it.

Previous research has identified challenges that hinder the effectiveness of participatory budgeting: limited knowledge of budgeting issues, a dispersed population in reaching conclusions, and decision-making on how to ensure that public spending matches public service delivery. In developed countries, participatory budgeting has prospered due to well-established, long-standing reforms and management; the case is different in developing countries like Tanzania (Miller et al., 2019).

At Nanyumbu District Council, experience shows that citizens participate in the participatory budgeting meetings, but it's unclear whether their inputs are incorporated into project selection. This study, therefore, aims to examine the influence of participatory budgeting on public service delivery in Tanzania, specifically in Nanyumbu District Council, Mtwara.

1.2 Research Objective

The study aims to investigate the influence of participatory budgeting on public service delivery: A case of Nanyumbu district council, Mtwara, Tanzania.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Institutional Theory

This study is grounded in Institutional Theory, which was developed by W. Richard Scott in 1987 and later refined in his 1995 work. Scott (1995) defined institutional theory as examining "the deeper and more resilient aspects of social structure" and "the processes by which structures, including schemes, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior"). The theory assumes that organizations operate within established institutional environments that shape their behavior through formal rules, cultural norms, and cognitive frameworks. Institutional theory considers "organizations to work within a given set of values, norms, and assumptions which constitute a reasonable economic behavior" (Science Direct Topics, 2024).

Institutional theory is relevant to the study because it provides a framework for allocating funds based on citizens' priorities, directly impacting the quality and focus of the service delivery system through advocacy and norm establishment. It considers addressing needs assessment and resource allocation, as well as evaluating and monitoring the budget to ensure that public funds are spent to address the community's needs.

2.2 Empirical Review

Musadat (2023) conducted a comprehensive study in Indonesia examining the effects of participatory budgeting on local government service delivery. The findings revealed that PB contributed to improved public outcomes, such as a higher net enrolment rate at the junior secondary school level and increased access to sanitation services. However, the study also identified significant limitations: poor representation of marginalized populations due to elite dominance in agenda setting, weak pro-poor targeting strategies, and low participation rates among disadvantaged groups.

Similarly, Harun et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between financial literacy and participatory budgeting in the context of village fund initiatives in Indonesia. Their findings indicated that many citizens, particularly the poor, lacked sufficient knowledge of budgeting processes, thereby restricting their active engagement. Other barriers included a lack of incentives and the high opportunity cost of participation, both of which contributed to unequal access to public services.

In Latin America, Buele et al. (2020) assessed the contribution of PB to local governance and found that, although widely applied, PB alone was insufficient to guarantee meaningful participation or improved governance outcomes. They recommended that PB be supported by complementary mechanisms, such as popular consultations, advisory councils, referenda, citizen observatories, and social accountability platforms, to deepen democratic engagement and policy legitimacy.

In the United Kingdom, Hagan et al. (2019) examined participatory budgeting in Scotland and found that while PB was intended to promote equality and community engagement, the Equality Act of 2010 limited its effectiveness. The Act fell short in enabling PB to serve as a strategic tool to combat inequality, leaving marginalized groups underrepresented in local budget decisions.

Within Tanzania, several studies have assessed the implementation and outcomes of PB at both urban and rural levels. Asukile and Mbogo (2022) examined the impact of budgetary practices, including participatory budgeting, on the performance of Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Ilala Municipal Council. Using regression analysis and factor analysis, the study found that participatory budgeting, budget planning, and execution were all positively correlated with improved budget performance. Among these, budget planning emerged as the most significant predictor of efficiency and effectiveness, offering practical insights for strengthening fiscal governance in LGAs.

A national-level scoping review by Manara (2024) synthesized 21 publications covering rural councils in Tanzania. The evidence suggests that participatory budgeting is highly context-sensitive and faces significant challenges in rural areas, including high participation costs, limited fiscal autonomy, weak political support, and trade-offs between inclusivity and depth of knowledge. These factors collectively hindered the applicability and success of PB in rural governance settings. Malipula (2022) conducted a qualitative stakeholder analysis in Kibaha Town Council. The study involved 42 participants, including focus groups and key informants, and revealed that space for citizen participation in planning and budgeting was severely limited. Most residents lacked both awareness and the ability to influence decisions, informally or formally, indicating the need for broader civic education and engagement efforts.

Mærøe et al. (2020) focused on digital innovation through e-participatory budgeting platforms. Their findings showed that digital PB initiatives in local governments had relatively low participation rates. The study linked this to weak e-governance frameworks and poor legitimacy practices, but also found that projects with higher visibility and funding tended to attract more citizen engagement. Implementing practical digital tools and information systems was identified as a way to boost civic involvement in budgetary decisions.

Finally, Madaha (2020) examined how PB could empower African communities using a Tanzanian case study. While the study found that frameworks for PB implementation existed and could promote community empowerment, they were vastly underutilized. The author concluded that if the Tanzanian government were to fully commit to engaging citizens at all administrative levels, PB could become a powerful instrument for inclusive and democratic local governance.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

This refers to the geographical location covered by the study, always stated in terms of the country, state, local government, community, discipline, or institution (Kumar, 2019). This study was conducted in the Mtwara region, at the Nanyumbu district council. The researcher chose this study area due to its uniqueness as an interactive business Center where people of different calibers interact and understand the importance of participatory budgeting for public service delivery within the specific context.

3.2 Research Design

Research design provides guidelines that direct the researcher towards solving the problem and may vary depending on the nature of the problem being studied. The study used a case study design. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), a case study design was used because it saved time and resources by allowing the researcher to gather information from a single location and from respondents only once. The case study design helped provide insight into the broader picture of the population by analyzing the basics in detail.

3.3 Population of Study

A population is any set, person, or object that possesses at least one common characteristic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Generally, it is a group of people or elements that share at least one common characteristic. The study's target population comprised 580 health officers, education officers, village executive officers, accounts officers, and planning officers from the Nanyumbu district council.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

According to Bryman (2016), probability sampling is choosing members based on a known probability. This study used probability sampling, in which a researcher selects individuals to participate and everyone has an equal chance of being selected. In this study, probability sampling was employed —specifically, simple random sampling — because it ensured that each participant had an equal chance of being selected. Purposive sampling was used in this study to select key informants, including civil society groups and local residents in the Nanyumbu district council.

A sample is a segment of the population selected for investigation. It is a subset of the population (Bryman, 2016). Nanyumbu district council has a total number of 580 workers. The researcher calculated the sample size using the Yamane formula

Table 1

Sample Distribution Table

No.	Type of Respondents	Population	Sample size
1	Health Officers	164	63
2	Education Officers	200	80
3	Accounts Officers	94	44
4	Village Executive Officers	72	28
5	Planning Officers	50	22
6	**Total**	**580**	**237**

3.5 Data Collection Methods & Instruments

Creswell (2014) defines data collection instruments as the specific tools or strategies that researchers use to collect data from participants in a study. These instruments help researchers gather information that is relevant to their research questions and objectives. This study used questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review as data collection tools.

According to Kothari (2004), a questionnaire is a method of data collection that involves asking individuals a series of predetermined questions to gather information on various topics. It can be used in surveys and other research methods to obtain quantitative data. Kothari (2004) defines an interview as a method involving the presentation of oral verbal stimuli and the elicitation of oral verbal responses. This method can be done through a face-to-face or telephone interview. The study used interviews to collect data that addressed specific objectives.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

The researcher's conclusions must therefore be trustworthy and legitimate. Any researcher seeking high-quality research should take validity and reliability into account when planning a study, interpreting the findings, and presenting them. As recommended by Kothari (2004), this study achieved validity in several ways. First, it involved carefully crafting questions and pre-testing questionnaires to ensure they were understandable and that potential issues were detected early, allowing for easy identification of remedies. Second, to identify and correct mistakes and omissions made during data recording, the gathered data was edited. The goal is to achieve accuracy, consistency, and completeness. The researcher formulated a sufficient number of questions for this study, and questionnaires were used to gather data from a variety of respondents. But the purpose of the reconnaissance was to test the equipment.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data processing and analysis for this study were carried out using both manual and statistical software techniques. Quantitative survey data were analyzed using SPSS to compute descriptive statistics (means, percentages, and frequencies) and assess the influence of participatory budgeting on public service delivery**.** Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically, following the steps outlined by Kothari (2004). This approach helped in identifying key themes and patterns in the data that align with the research objectives. The combination of statistical and thematic analysis enabled robust interpretation of both objective and subjective data, offering a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

A total of 237 questionnaires were distributed to participants across various departments within the council. Of these, 220 questionnaires were fully completed and returned, yielding an exceptionally high response rate of 95.6%. Such a strong response rate strengthens the credibility of the findings and provides a solid basis for drawing reliable conclusions. In addition to the questionnaire responses, 10 interviews were conducted, achieving a 100% response rate, as all targeted participants were available and agreed to participate in the scheduled interview sessions. Interviews were conducted in real time by the researcher. The integration of both survey and interview data enhanced the richness of the dataset and enabled triangulation, which helps validate findings through cross-verification across multiple sources (Dillman et al., 2014).

Overall, the combination of high response rates and diverse data sources enriched the analysis by providing a broad understanding of key issues, including respondents' demographic backgrounds, familiarity with budget processes, and engagement with participatory budgeting initiatives at the local level.

Table 2

Response Rate of Questionnaire Distribution

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires Distributed	237	100%
Questionnaires Returned	220	95.6%
Questionnaires Not Returned	17	24.4%

4.2 Perceptions of Government Officials on the Influence of Participatory Budgeting on Public Service Delivery

This was the study's first objective. To address this objective, the study investigated four key variables that directly reflect perception: transparency and fairness of PB processes, satisfaction with service delivery outcomes, government responsiveness to community needs, and citizen empowerment through participation. These variables were selected because they indicate how citizens evaluate the effectiveness and inclusiveness of participatory budgeting and whether they believe it contributes meaningfully to the quality and accessibility of public services. The findings for each variable are discussed below.

Table 3

Government officials Perception of the Influence of Participatory Budgeting on Public Service Delivery

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I am aware of participatory budgeting processes in my community.	15 (6.8%)	20 (9.1%)	25 (11.4%)	80 (36.4%)	80 (36.4%)	220 (100%)
Participatory budgeting has improved public service delivery.	20 (9.1%)	30 (13.6%)	40 (18.2%)	70 (31.8%)	60 (27.3%)	220 (100%)
Government officials' involvement leads to better allocation of public funds.	10 (4.5%)	25 (11.4%)	35 (15.9%)	90 (40.9%)	60 (27.3%)	220 (100%)
The government is transparent about how PB decisions are implemented.	25 (11.4%)	35 (15.9%)	50 (22.7%)	70 (31.8%)	40 (18.2%)	220 (100%)

Frequencies (%)

The findings in Table 2 show that the majority of government officials expressed positive perceptions of participatory budgeting (PB) and its role in enhancing public service delivery, although levels of agreement varied across the different indicators: Awareness of PB Processes: About 72.8% of respondents reported being aware of PB processes in their communities, while only 15.9% disagreed and 11.4% remained neutral. This suggests that PB initiatives have achieved significant visibility among citizens, a necessary step toward inclusive participation.

Improved Service Delivery: A total of 59.1% agreed that PB has enhanced public service delivery, with 22.7% disagreeing and 18.2% neutral. While the majorities recognize improvements, the relatively high share of neutral and disagreeing responses suggests that not all respondents have experienced tangible benefits, underscoring the need for more consistent service outcomes across different areas. Better Allocation of Public Funds. The perception that citizen involvement leads to better allocation of funds received strong support, with 68.2% agreeing/strongly agreeing, compared to only 15.9% disagreeing and 15.9% neutral. This indicates that citizens value the input they provide in budgetary processes and believe it results in more efficient and fair resource use.

Government Transparency. Responses were more divided on transparency. While 50% agreed or strongly agreed that the government is transparent about PB implementation, a notable 27.3% disagreed, and 22.7% remained neutral. This demonstrates that, although PB has introduced greater openness, many citizens still feel the government could enhance accountability and clarity in how decisions are implemented. Citizen Involvement in PB. The strongest level of agreement was recorded for the statement on expanding citizen involvement, with 81.9% in favor and only 6.8% disagreeing. This underscores a widespread demand for more participatory opportunities, reflecting that while citizens value the process, they believe it remains limited in inclusivity and scale.

The findings suggest that participatory budgeting is primarily perceived as beneficial in promoting transparency, better resource allocation, and improved service delivery. However, concerns about limited inclusiveness and inconsistent government transparency remain. Most notably, the overwhelming call for greater citizen involvement indicates that expanding participation could strengthen trust, accountability, and the overall effectiveness of PB in delivering public services. In addition, respondents were interviewed to obtain their opinions on various variables related to citizens' perceptions of participatory budgeting's influence. On the statement, transparency and fairness of PB processes. One of the health officers said,

> *"It is somewhat transparent, but not entirely inclusive. Some groups, especially marginalized communities, struggle to have their voices heard due to limited awareness or accessibility issues. Sometimes, even the leaders involved in budgeting are corrupt and prioritize their personal needs over societal welfare. The presence of bias, nepotism, and arrogance undermines the fairness of PB."*

Another one added,

> *"We only attend village meetings to raise concerns, but the local government already makes the final decisions. This limits the transparency and fairness of the budgeting process, as community input has little influence on outcomes. Although public meetings are organized to educate people on PB, attendance is often low. This, combined with tax ignorance and corruption, makes it difficult to achieve transparency and equitable distribution of resources."*

Regarding the variable satisfaction with service delivery outcomes;

One of the education officers said;

> *"Public service delivery is inconsistent. While there have been improvements in some areas, such as road maintenance and waste management, healthcare and education still require significant investment. I believe PB has a positive impact because it allows the government to understand and prioritize the real needs of the people. However, a lack of follow-through can lead to frustration among citizens. Sometimes, disengagement and negligence of village leaders make citizens perceive PB as not being effective in solving their concerns and regard it as a negative aspect."*

Regarding the variable government responsiveness to community needs, one of them, who is a local government official, said,

> *"It is a shame how we organize public meetings to provide education regarding PB, but the number of participants attending the meeting is very low, which is very discouraging and heartbreaking. Bad enough when it comes to citizens paying taxes; first, they do not pay on time, and some are unaware that the taxes they pay are used to fund public services and improve social services. We do have a long way to go to improve service delivery in our council."*

Moreover, this study also interviewed local residents to get their perceptions regarding how participatory budgeting influence service delivery.

A local business owner added;

> *"PB can help the government understand real community needs. However, if these inputs are ignored or manipulated by politicians, responsiveness becomes questionable. A parent may care about education, while a commuter might prioritize roads. Politicians tend to respond only to the majority voices, which may not reflect the most pressing or diverse needs of the whole community. Government officials argue that the community's low literacy limits meaningful input, so decisions are made based on what they perceive as a priority. This top-down approach limits genuine responsiveness."*

Regarding the variable citizen empowerment through participation, one elderly citizen insisted;

> *"Participatory budgeting has the potential to empower citizens, especially when it includes marginalized voices. When done right, it can address systemic issues and bring equity. Unfortunately, many citizens are not fully informed about how the budgeting process works. With better awareness and education, more people would participate, and their involvement could lead to better outcomes and a stronger sense of empowerment."*

Another one added**;**

> *"Participatory budgeting can be a powerful tool to address inequities in our neighborhoods. When marginalized voices are included, we can ensure that funding addresses systemic issues affecting our communities. However, I worry that participatory budgeting might favor younger voices. Older residents often have different needs, and I hope that our perspectives are also considered in these discussions.''*

4.2.1 Challenges Affecting Effective Participatory Budgeting on Public Service Delivery

The study investigated five key variables that directly reflect challenges affecting PB: bureaucratic hurdles, lack of awareness, resource limitations, political interference, and low citizen participation. These variables were selected because they indicate how citizens failed to engage effectively in participatory budgeting due to such constraints. The findings for each variable are discussed below.

Table 4
Challenges Affecting PB

Challenges of PB	Frequency	Per cent
Bureaucratic hurdles	22	10
Lack of awareness	31	14.0
Resource limitations	30	13.6
Political interference	71	32.2
Low citizen participation	66	30
Total	**220**	**100.0**

From the table above 3, 22 (10%) of respondents indicated that bureaucratic hurdles are the biggest challenge, 31 (14%) revealed the existence of a lack of awareness, 30 (13.6%) stated resource limitations as a shortcoming, 71 (32.2%) noted that political interference, and 66 (30%) low citizen participation. Respondents were also interviewed about their views on challenges affecting PB, and they had the following to say. One of the public servants said,

> *"As a government official, I often encounter significant bureaucratic hurdles that impede effective participatory delivery. The existing administrative processes are often convoluted and slow, which discourages citizen engagement. For instance, lengthy approval processes for community projects can lead to frustration among citizens who feel their voices are not heard in a timely manner. Additionally, the lack of clear guidelines for navigating these bureaucratic systems creates confusion, making it difficult for citizens to understand how they can participate meaningfully in governance. This complexity not only alienates citizens but also results in missed opportunities for valuable input that could enhance public services."*

Another community leader added;

> *"Bureaucratic hurdles are a major barrier to effective participation in our community. Many residents feel overwhelmed by the paperwork and regulations required to engage with local government. For example, when we try to organize community meetings to discuss local issues, we often face delays in securing permits or approvals. This not only wastes time but also diminishes community enthusiasm for participation. We need to advocate for streamlined processes that allow for quicker responses and more accessible pathways for community involvement."*

Moreover, respondents reported dissatisfaction with the level of awareness of PB. One of the respondents said;

> *"Many citizens are simply unaware of their rights or the mechanisms available for them to engage with local governance. Our surveys indicate that a significant portion of the population is unaware of public forums or how to voice their concerns effectively. This lack of awareness is compounded by insufficient outreach efforts from local authorities. We need to implement comprehensive awareness campaigns that educate citizens about their rights and the importance of their participation in decision-making processes."*

Another one insisted;

> *"I often feel that many people in my neighborhood don't know how to get involved in local governance. There are meetings and forums, but they aren't well publicized, and many residents don't even know they exist. This lack of awareness leads to a sense of disconnection from the decision-making processes that affect our lives. I believe that if more people were informed about these opportunities, we would see a much higher level of engagement and participation in our community."*

Regarding resource limitations, respondents are not pleased with how authorities allocate resources for public services. One of the respondents said;

> *"Our department often struggles with insufficient funding to support community engagement initiatives. For instance, we would like to hold more workshops and informational sessions to encourage citizen participation, but budget constraints limit our ability to do so. Additionally, the lack of human resources*

> *means that we cannot dedicate enough staff to outreach efforts, which further hampers our ability to engage with the community effectively."*

Another one emphasized;

> *"From my perspective, resource limitations severely impact our ability to mobilize citizens for participatory initiatives. We often rely on volunteers to run programs, but without adequate funding, we cannot provide the necessary training or materials. This lack of resources not only affects the quality of our outreach but also discourages potential participants who may feel that the initiatives are not well-supported or credible. We need to advocate for better funding and resource allocation to ensure that participatory processes are robust and effective."*

Additionally, political interference is a big bottleneck at the Nanyumbu district council. Most respondents preferred that PB be separated from political interference and given the chance to operate independently within defined boundaries. One of the respondents said;

> *"Often, local leaders may prioritize their political agendas over genuine community needs, which can skew the participatory process. For example, when decisions are made based on political affiliations rather than community input, it breeds distrust among citizens. This interference can lead to tokenistic participation, in which citizens are invited to provide input, but their feedback is ultimately ignored. To foster genuine engagement, we need to establish independent oversight mechanisms that can ensure that participatory processes are free from political manipulation."*

4.4 Discussion

4.4.1 Perceptions of Government Officials on the Influence of Participatory Budgeting on Public Service Delivery.

The first objective of the study sought to evaluate how citizens regard engaging in participatory budgeting (PB). The findings indicated that about 72.8% of respondents were aware of PB in their communities, suggesting that the initiative has gained some recognition. However, awareness alone did not necessarily guarantee meaningful engagement, as many of them still lacked the knowledge or confidence to participate fully. This observation is consistent with Malipula (2022), who argues that many Tanzanian citizens are unaware of the importance of their voices in decision-making and remain passive during budget hearings.

Regarding service delivery, the study found that 59.1% of respondents agreed, while 22.7% disagreed. PB has contributed to improvements in some sectors, though citizens felt that benefits were unevenly distributed. While areas such as infrastructure and waste management had made some progress, others, such as education and health services, required further attention. These findings support Madaha's (2021) argument that citizens often view PB as time-consuming and bureaucratic, with limited impact on service quality.

Regarding resource allocation, about 68.2% of citizens acknowledged that PB provides an avenue for better prioritization of public funds, suggesting that their participation can lead to a fairer and more efficient distribution. Nonetheless, challenges remained, particularly regarding the top-down nature of decision-making. These findings are consistent with Manara (2024) emphasize that PB in Tanzania is still dominated by district and central government structures, with communities often restricted to implementation rather than active decision-making.

Government transparency emerged as a divided area of opinion. Findings revealed that 50% agreed with the statement while 27.3% disagreed. While some citizens recognized improvements in openness, others expressed concern that PB decisions were often predetermined, reducing the credibility of the process. This finding aligns with Cabannes (2015), who observes that local authorities frequently exert substantial control over PB processes, and with Sedmihradská et al. (2022), who argues that communities in Tanzania generally participate at a low level of consultation, while ultimate authority remains with government institutions.

4.4.2 Challenges Affecting Effective Participatory Budgeting

Study findings revealed that, at the Nanyumbu district council, citizens are invited to vote on various projects during the PB process. Nevertheless, the process may pose practical challenges when contextual issues are disregarded, especially in marginalized and remote rural areas. Marginalized groups do not have enough votes to air their concerns, and they are taken for granted. Moreover, rural area citizens are not active in PB process as in urban areas. Even their literacy level is low.

These findings align with Madaha (2020) who explained how cumbersome procedures often delay decision-making processes. For instance, the approval of community projects can take months due to excessive paperwork and regulations. This not only frustrates citizens but also undermines their trust in local government. We need to streamline processes to ensure that public input translates into timely action, thereby enhancing community engagement. From a grassroots perspective, bureaucratic obstacles are a major barrier to participation. Harun et al. (2021) highlights that complex bureaucratic structures can alienate citizens. Many community members feel overwhelmed by the requirements to engage with local authorities. Simplifying these processes is essential to encourage participation. If citizens perceive engagement as burdensome, they are less likely to contribute, ultimately hampering effective public service delivery.

Malipula (2022) notes that many citizens are unaware of their rights and the avenues for participation in governance. This ignorance leads to a disconnect between the government and the community. Increasing awareness through targeted campaigns can empower citizens, making them more likely to engage with public services and contribute to decision-making. In a similar vein, Sedmihradská et al. (2022) emphasized that without proper information, citizens may not realize how their involvement can affect change. Our educational workshops aim to bridge this gap, but there's still a long way to go. We need sustained efforts to inform communities about participatory opportunities, so everyone can take part in shaping public services.

These findings align with Peters et al. (2020), who indicated that when political agendas overshadow community needs, genuine participation suffers. For instance, local leaders may prioritize projects that align with their political interests rather than those that reflect the community's needs. This dynamic can lead to disillusionment among citizens who may feel that their voices are not heard or valued in the decision-making process.

If local governments lack the authority to allocate funds effectively, the process feels hollow. Citizens become frustrated when they see that their input does not lead to real changes because decision-makers are bound by restrictive budgets or regulations. These findings are consistent with Rugeiyamu (2021), who discussed how insufficient funding hampers the ability to conduct outreach and engagement activities. For example, without adequate budget allocations, the community struggles to organize community forums that facilitate citizen input. This lack of resources not only affects the quality of participation but also limits the scope of services we can offer.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study concluded that there are positive perceptions towards PB among citizens of the Nanyumbu district council; however, citizens felt less empowered and satisfied by the process as it was not practiced fully across the district. Also, the study concluded that there are many challenges, such as low citizen participation and bureaucratic hurdles, which make PB ineffective at Nanyumbu District Council, as there are limited initiative measures to raise awareness and motivate citizens to use the e-feedback system at large.

5.2 Recommendations

Nanyumbu district should partner with local organizations to provide workshops and training sessions that inform citizens about participatory processes, how to navigate them, and the importance of their involvement in governance. Moreover, it should establish a dedicated fund for participatory projects that local governments and NGOs can access. This fund should prioritize initiatives that promote community engagement and capacity building.

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