

AFRICA UNIVERSITY  
(A United Methodist-Related Institution)

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN  
HARARE CITY COUNCIL'S BUDGETARY PROCESSES

BY

RODNEY CHESTERFIELD SAMBA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER IN PUBLIC POLICY  
AND GOVERNANCE IN THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, PEACE  
LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE.

2025



## Abstract

This study examines strategies for enhancing citizen participation in the budgetary processes of devolved local governments, focusing on the City of Harare, Zimbabwe. Using a mixed-methods approach combining survey data from 200 respondents and interviews with 15 key informants, the study found that traditional engagement strategies such as public meetings (mean = 3.81) and consultative workshops (mean = 3.69) are used more frequently than digital platforms (mean = 3.40) or feedback forms (mean = 3.28). Effectiveness ratings were moderate, with public meetings (mean = 3.70) and trust-building (mean = 3.60) scoring slightly higher than online participation (mean = 3.35). Key barriers to participation included low awareness (mean = 3.72), political interference (mean = 3.60), and limited digital access (mean = 3.48). Correlation analysis showed a strong positive relationship between engagement strategies and participation ( $r = 0.618$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), while regression results indicated that strategy effectiveness explained 31.6% of the variance in participation ( $R^2 = 0.316$ ,  $F = 92.45$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). However, chi-square ( $\chi^2 = 0.85$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and t-test ( $t = 1.42$ ,  $p = 0.157$ ) results revealed no significant differences in participation across age or gender groups. Qualitative insights highlighted that while traditional methods remain culturally relevant, they are hindered by weak feedback mechanisms, political influence, and limited inclusivity. The study concludes that citizen participation in Harare's budgetary processes remains moderate but structurally constrained, calling for systemic reforms that expand digital inclusion, decentralize consultations, strengthen civic awareness, and build trust to transform tokenistic engagement into genuine citizen-driven governance.

**Keywords:** Citizen Participation, Budgetary Processes, Participatory Governance, Local Governance, Harare.

## Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my original work except where sources have been cited and acknowledged. The work has never been or will it ever be submitted to another university for the award of a degree.

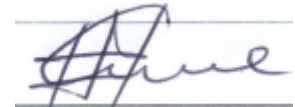


Rodney Chesterfield Samba

---

Student's Full Name

Student's Signature (22/10/2025)



Dr Tawanda Nyikadzino

---

Supervisor's Full Name

Signature (27/10/2025)

## **Copyright**

No part of this dissertation may be reproduced, stored in any system or transmitted in any form by any means for scholarly purposes without prior written permission of the author or of Africa University on behalf of the author.

## **Acknowledgements**

To God, who makes all things possible!

My sincere gratitude goes to my family, and friends for the steadfast support and encouragement throughout this study. Particular mention goes to my pillar of strength who always reminded me to believe in myself.

A special feeling of appreciation goes to my supervisor, for his guidance, support, counselling, encouragement and most of all for his patience throughout the study. He immensely assisted in steering the ship towards the shore.

I would also like to thank my classmates, Master in Public Policy and Governance, Class of August 2025. You are all special and I will always be indebted to you all. May the good Lord continue to bless, guide and protect you.

## **Dedication**

This research is dedicated to family, friends and loved ones who taught me to never stop believing.

I salute you!

## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviation**

CBO .....	Community-Based Organization
CBD .....	Central Business District
GDP .....	Gross Domestic Product
ICT .....	Information and Communication Technology
NGO .....	Non-Governmental Organization
SDGs .....	Sustainable Development Goals
ZEC .....	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZIMSTAT .....	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
FM .....	Feedback Mechanism
GIS .....	Geographic Information System
SPSS .....	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UN .....	United Nations
FAO .....	Food and Agriculture Organization
OECD .....	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
MDGs .....	Millennium Development Goals
M&E .....	Monitoring and Evaluation
EIA .....	Environmental Impact Assessment

## Definition of Key Terms

**Citizen participation:** The active involvement of individuals and community groups in influencing, contributing to, or making decisions about public affairs and resource allocation (Schugurensky, 2024).

**Budgetary processes:** The sequential stages of budget formulation, approval, execution, and evaluation through which public revenues and expenditures are planned and controlled (World Bank, 2023).

**Devolved local government:** The transfer of political, administrative, and fiscal authority from central government to elected local authorities with legal personality (Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, 2022).

**Participatory budgeting:** A democratic process that allows citizens to deliberate and decide directly on the allocation of a portion of public funds (Gherghina, 2022).

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	i
----------------	---

Declaration .....	ii
Copyright.....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Dedication .....	v
List of Acronyms and Abbreviation.....	vi
Definition of Key Terms .....	vii
List of Tables.....	xii
List of Figures .....	xiii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Background of the Study .....	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem .....	4
1.4 Objectives .....	6
1.5 Research Questions .....	7
1.6 Justification of the Study .....	7
1.7 Delimitations of the Study.....	10
1.8 Limitation of the Study.....	11
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....	13
2.1 Introduction .....	13
2.2 Theoretical Framework .....	13
2.2.1 Participatory Governance Theory.....	14
2.2.2. Social Capital Theory .....	15
2.3 Strategies that are Used to Engage Citizens in Local Budgetary Processes.....	16
2.4 Effectiveness of the Strategies Employed in Fostering Citizen Participation in Local Budgetary Processes.....	18
2.5 Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of the Strategies used by city councils to Enhance Citizen Participation in Local Budgetary Processes.....	20
2.6 Strategies for Improving Citizen Participation in Local Budgetary Processes	22

2.7 Conceptual Framework .....	24
2.8 Research Gap.....	25
2.9 Summary.....	29
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY .....	31
3.1 Introduction .....	31
3.2 Research Design .....	31
3.3 Population and Sampling.....	34
3.3.1 Population .....	34
3.3.2 Sampling .....	36
3.4 Data Collection Instruments .....	38
3.5 Pilot Study .....	41
3.6 Data Collection Procedure.....	42
3.7 Analysis and Organization of Data.....	44
3.8 Ethical Consideration .....	46
3.9 Summary.....	48
CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION	49
4.1 Introduction .....	49
4.2 Demographic Analysis .....	49
4.2.1 Gender.....	49
4.2.2 Age Group.....	51
4.2.3 Educational Level .....	52
4.2.4 Occupation .....	53
4.2.5 Residential Area in Harare.....	54
4.2.6 Duration of Residency in Harare .....	55
4.2.7 Previous Participation in a City of Harare Budgetary Process .....	57
4.2.8 Reliability Test (Cronbach’s Alpha).....	58
4.3 Strategies Used by City of Harare .....	59

4.4 Effectiveness of Strategies employed by the City of Harare Council in fostering citizen participation in local budgetary processes. ....	60
4.5 Factors Influencing Effectiveness.....	61
4.6 Strategies for Improvement for improving citizen participation in local budgetary processes within the City of Harare Council. ....	62
4.7 Qualitative Findings .....	63
4.8 Data Analysis.....	67
4.8.1 Strategies Used by City of Harare .....	67
4.8.2 Effectiveness of Strategies employed by the City of Harare Council in fostering citizen participation in local budgetary processes. ....	68
4.8.3 Factors Influencing Effectiveness.....	69
4.8.4 Strategies for Improvement for improving citizen participation in local budgetary processes within the City of Harare Council. ....	71
4.9 Statistical Analysis and Hypothesis Testing.....	73
4.9.1 Correlation: Strategies vs Participation .....	73
4.9.2 Regression: Effectiveness → Participation.....	74
4.9.3 Chi-square: Age vs Participation .....	74
4.9.4 T-test: Gender vs Participation .....	75
4.10 Summary.....	76
CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	77
5.0 Introduction .....	77
5.1 Summary of the Findings .....	77
5.1.1 Strategies Used by City of Harare .....	77
5.1.2 Effectiveness of Strategies.....	78
5.1.3 Factors Influencing Effectiveness.....	79
5.1.4 Strategies for Improvement .....	79
5.2 Conclusions of the Findings .....	80
5.2.1 Strategies Used by City of Harare .....	81

5.2.2 Effectiveness of Strategies.....	82
5.2.3 Factors Influencing Effectiveness.....	83
5.2.4 Strategies for Improvement .....	84
5.3 Recommendations Based on the Findings.....	85
5.4 Recommendations for Future Studies .....	87
References .....	88
APPENDIX I: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT .....	95
Appendix ii: Informed Consent.....	104
Appendix iii: Council Study Authorization .....	106
CITY OF HARARE.....	106
RE: AUTHORITY TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH: RODNEY C. SAMBA.....	106
ZIMBABWE : THE CASE OF CITY OF HARARE." .....	106
MR J. DUVE ACTING HUMAN CAPITAL DIRECTOR.....	106
Appendix iv: Africa University Research Ethics Committee .....	107
MUTARE.....	107
AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE .....	108

## List of Tables

Table 3. 1: Summary of Sample Sizes and Justifications .....	36
Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha .....	58
Table 3: Strategies.....	59
Table 4: Effectiveness of Strategies.....	60
Table 5: Factors Influencing Effectiveness.....	61
Table 6: Strategies for Improvement.....	62
Table 7: Correlation analysis .....	73
Table 8: Regression analysis.....	74
Table 9: chi-square test .....	75
Table 10: T-test .....	76

## List of Figures

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Model .....	24
Figure 2: Gender of the Participants .....	50
Figure 3: Age of the Participants .....	51
Figure 4: Educational Level of the Participants .....	52
Figure 5: Occupation of the Participants.....	53
Figure 6: Participants Area of Residents.....	54
Figure 7: Length of Service .....	56
Figure 8: Previous Participation.....	57

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This research focuses on strategies for enhancing citizen participation in budgetary processes of devolved local governments in Zimbabwe, specifically the City of Harare. It addresses fundamental aspects such as the statement of the problem, the objectives, and the research questions to explore significant barriers to effective citizen engagement in budgeting. The justification for the study highlights the importance of participatory governance in promoting accountability and social justice. Additionally, the study delineates its scope, examining pertinent limitations and delimitations to ensure a clear understanding of the context and potential challenges encountered in the research process.

### **1.2 Background of the Study**

The increasing demand for enhanced citizen participation in government budgeting processes reflects a broader global movement toward transparent and accountable governance, grounded in democratic principles. In a world grappling with persistent issues such as corruption, fiscal irresponsibility, and social inequality, particularly in developing nations, the significance of citizen engagement in public decision-making is increasingly recognized. Traditional budgeting methods often characterized by autocratic top-down approaches have proven inadequate in addressing the diverse interests and needs of local communities, leading to disillusionment and disengagement among citizens. In Zimbabwe, a country marked by a myriad of governance challenges, the necessity for increased citizen involvement in budgetary processes is particularly pronounced, especially within local governance structures. As urban centers like Harare confront rapid population growth and entrenched socio-economic disparities, the call for a more participatory budgeting approach emerges as

a critical strategy for fostering effective, representative government suitable for the context.

Participatory budgeting is an innovative democratic process that empowers citizens to actively engage in the allocation of public funds within their communities. Unlike traditional budgeting methods where decisions are made behind closed doors by a select few, Participatory budgeting encourages transparent dialogues among community stakeholders regarding spending priorities. In its typical execution, participatory budgeting involves a series of collaborative meetings where residents can propose initiatives, discuss various budget allocations, and ultimately vote on the projects they deem most essential. This process not only empowers citizens but also fosters greater accountability and enhances public trust in government operations. As highlighted by Roberts (2020), participatory budgeting transforms citizens from passive recipients of government services into active agents of change, creating a sense of ownership and responsibility toward community development. This engagement can lead to the allocation of resources that directly reflect the priorities and needs of the community, ultimately resulting in enhanced public service delivery and social equity.

The global adoption of participatory budgeting has yielded significant benefits in various urban contexts, demonstrating its efficacy as a tool for enhancing governance and accountability. Noteworthy examples abound, with Brazil's Porto Alegre initiative serving as a pioneering case that has inspired cities worldwide. The Porto Alegre model facilitated citizen forums where budget priorities were determined collaboratively, leading to more equitable spending on social services and infrastructure (Wampler, 2021). Studies indicate that such participatory approaches do not only improve service delivery but also foster a stronger civic identity, as citizens

feel more invested in the outcomes of government expenditures (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2021). Additionally, participatory budgeting practices adopted in cities throughout France and beyond have showcased how citizens' voices can shape local budgets to reflect community priorities, ultimately enhancing the public's trust in local governance (Gérard, 2022). These international examples underline the importance of participatory governance as a framework that empowers citizens and fosters accountability in public finance management.

At the continental scale, Africa faces unique hurdles in implementing effective participatory budgeting practices due to persistent issues such as entrenched poverty, inequality, and corruption. The African Development Bank (2023) emphasizes that fostering citizen engagement in budgeting processes is pivotal for steering nations toward improved fiscal accountability and service delivery. Countries such as Kenya exemplify successful applications of participatory budgeting, showcasing how active citizen participation can contribute to more equitable public resource distribution and greater trust in governmental institutions (MacMurray, 2023). These experiences demonstrate that while the need for participatory budgeting is recognized across Africa, systemic barriers including inadequate institutional frameworks and entrenched corruption often diminish its effectiveness. The push for stronger participatory budgeting practices in African nations reveals a collective recognition of the role that engaged citizenship can play in combating these challenges.

In the context of Zimbabwe, the challenges facing local governance have compounded in the post-Independence era, where political instability and economic mismanagement have led to declining public trust in local institutions. Despite the constitutional framework promoting participatory democracy and providing citizens access to information, meaningful engagement in the budgeting process remains

limited. The 2019 Zimbabwe National Human Settlements Policy highlights that while citizen participation is essential for effective urban governance, the actual implementation often falls short, resorting to superficial methods that fail to genuinely involve the community (Government of Zimbabwe, 2019). The disconnect between government processes and community needs exacerbates the sense of alienation among citizens, resulting in skepticism regarding government accountability and responsiveness, as noted by Chikerema et al. (2024).

In Harare, rapid urbanization combined with public service delivery crises underscores the urgent need for improved citizen involvement in local governance. According to the City of Harare's 2020 Budget Report, over 70% of Harare's residents rely on informal employment, emphasizing the critical need for local governments to prioritize investment in essential social services and infrastructure (City of Harare, 2020). However, systemic bureaucratic inefficiencies and inadequate feedback mechanisms frustrate significant citizen participation in budget-making processes. Several studies have shown that these bureaucratic limitations often lead to decisions that do not reflect the actual needs of residents, thus stimulating dissatisfaction and a sense of disenchantment with local governance structures (Mutasa & Kamusale, 2023). This lack of meaningful involvement further alienates citizens from the very decisions that shape their lived experiences, fostering widespread distrust in local governance, especially as allegations of corruption circulate regarding budget allocations.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Despite Zimbabwe's constitutional and legislative commitment to decentralisation and participatory governance articulated under the 2013 Constitution and subsequent public finance management provisions citizen participation in the budgetary processes of the City of Harare remains limited, inconsistent, and largely ineffective. In theory,

decentralised local government ought to empower citizens to influence fiscal decisions that affect their daily lives. Yet in practice, active public engagement in budgeting is characterised by minimal attendance at consultative forums, insufficient dissemination of budget information in accessible formats, and weak mechanisms to integrate citizen input into decision-making. For instance, the 2023 Open Budget Survey for Zimbabwe reports a public participation score of only 22 out of 100 indicating very few meaningful opportunities for citizens to engage in the budget process (International Budget Partnership, 2023).

The underlying causes of low citizen participation are multiple and deeply interconnected. Institutional and administrative constraints play a major role: local government bodies often lack robust feedback mechanisms, schedule consultations without adequate public notice, and produce budget documents that are highly technical and inaccessible to many citizens. Research in Zimbabwe has underscored these structural impediments, showing that while participatory budgeting models have been formally adopted by urban local authorities (including Harare), full implementation remains problematic (Magande, Nyika & Mutsindikwa, 2021). Secondly, there is limited civic awareness and capacity among citizens. Many residents do not fully understand the budgeting process, their rights to participation, or how their input can influence outcomes. A study of rural local government in Zimbabwe found that low educational levels and poor understanding of budgeting terminology were significant barriers to effective engagement (Ndlovu & Van der Waldt, 2025). Thirdly, socio-economic and political dynamics further inhibit participation: high rates of informal employment, widespread poverty, and a legacy of distrust in local authorities constrain citizens' ability and willingness to engage. For example, research into budgeting during the COVID-19 pandemic found that

lockdown restrictions and a shift to digital consultation disproportionately excluded marginalised groups lacking internet access and digital literacy (Chikerema, Chakunda & Mukunyadze, 2024).

These systemic obstacles have tangible consequences: budgets that do not reflect community priorities, weaker accountability and transparency in local governance, and increasing citizen disengagement and mistrust in local institutions. In Harare's context—characterised by rapid urbanisation, service delivery challenges and a large informal economy—the implications of weak citizen participation in budgeting are especially acute. Moreover, there is a notable gap in empirical literature examining how and why citizen participation in budget formulation fails in the context of devolved local government in Zimbabwe. While global models demonstrate the potential of participatory budgeting to enhance equity and trust, these models cannot be transplanted directly without adaptation to Zimbabwe's unique institutional, socio-economic and political realities.

Thus, this study sought to fill this knowledge gap by systematically analysing the institutional, socio-economic and policy-practical factors that hinder meaningful citizen engagement in the budgeting processes of the City of Harare, and by proposing evidence-based strategies to strengthen participatory budgeting, improve transparency and promote inclusive local governance.

#### **1.4 Objectives**

1. To explore the strategies that the City of Harare Council is using to engage citizens in local budgetary processes.
2. To assess the effectiveness of the strategies employed by the City of Harare Council in fostering citizen participation in local budgetary processes.

3. To examine the factors influencing the effectiveness of the strategies that the City of Harare Council is using to enhance citizen participation in local budgetary processes.
4. To recommend strategies for improving citizen participation in local budgetary processes within the City of Harare Council.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What strategies is the City of Harare Council using to engage citizens in local budgetary processes?
2. How effective are the strategies that the City of Harare Council is using in fostering citizen participation in local budgetary processes?
3. What are the factors influencing the effectiveness of the strategies that the City of Harare Council is using to foster citizen participation in local budgetary processes?
4. How can citizen participation in local budgetary processes be improved in the City of Harare Council?

### **1.6 Justification of the Study**

The study sought to examine ways of fostering the active participation of citizens in preparing and implementing their city budget using the City of Harare case study. The research was imperative during this era of increasingly sophisticated socio-economic needs and, by the nature of tradition, unstable government in Zimbabwe. The relevance of this study arose from the continued challenges of public engagement and governance in decentralized systems. Using the City of Harare case study, the study offers insights on the facts and trends of citizen involvement in local budget-making processes, making a significant contribution to different areas of utmost significance:

This study adds to current literature on decentralization, specifically its ability to support greater citizen participation in governance. The shortcomings in existing knowledge stemmed from a lack of empirical evidence regarding how such processes operated in reality in Zimbabwe. By analysing the particular strategies used by the City of Harare to involve citizens, as indicated in research questions one and two, the study produced original empirical evidence immediately relevant to the Zimbabwean local government context. It also identified how local conditions, such as political culture, socio-economic conditions, and public trust, influenced the success of these strategies. The findings of this research were not only applicable to Zimbabwean scholars but also to practitioners who sought knowledge about such dynamics in other developing countries facing governance challenges. Through careful observation of how decentralization varied in its effectiveness based on local contexts, the research was used to bridge the gap between theoretical debates about decentralization and citizens' experiences of budgetary engagement.

The conclusions of this study would likely hold significant implications for local government program planning and social policy in Zimbabwe. By identifying the particular barriers to effective citizen participation in budgeting in the City of Harare, the research provides actionable suggestions to policymakers for how civic participation can be increased and government made more responsive. This particular line intentionally aims at the second and fourth study questions both of which involved assessing the impact of current procedures and setting aside alternative paths towards civic engagement. Knowing how people perceive and are involved in their local government structures might inform landmark insights in the reforming of policies and practices in budget. Finally, these bids were intended to promote a more responsive

system to the needs and priorities of the City of Harare's various populations through public expenditure, thereby toward enhanced governance results and service delivery.

Involving the local communities in the research process has a two-fold purpose: it empowers them by making them important through their voices and opinions being considered in the matter of budget determination while also promoting an inclusive setting where solutions are collectively created. As the findings of this study engage citizens, local leaders, and government leaders in discussion, they can drive a culture of dialogue and collaboration to increase citizens' participation in governance. The dialogue is not only in tandem with research question four, but also with calling for participatory practices that resonate with the actualities and priority of the society. Through prioritizing local experience and knowledge, the study hoped to promote citizen stewardship over governance decisions and, in the process, contribute to greater participatory and more informed involvement in local governance.

Pedagogical implications of this study span across different fields such as public administration, political science, and development studies. Interlacing the study findings with the fabric of governance helps in enriching study materials as well as increasing student interest towards local governance and matters of citizens' participation. For teachers, the findings of the study provide case studies that reflect the dynamics and nuances of citizens' participation in governance, making learning richer. It also points out the significance of research to the real socio-political realities and highlights the role of applied research in enabling future practitioners and leaders with the capability to address issues of good governance. By promoting relationships between practice and theory, the study is intended to generate a new practitioner cohort that not only understands governance theories but also can build inclusive participatory practices within their respective communities.

### **1.7 Delimitations of the Study**

The study area was deliberately scoped to cover the City of Harare, where there is a critical case study of citizen involvement in the process of budget making in the devolved local councils in Zimbabwe. By confining the study within Harare, the study sought to investigate the exclusive socio-economic, political, and cultural factors that influence the dynamic of the capital city's local government. Delimitation enables intensive investigation of how particular factors such as the demographics, economic processes, and state apparatus affect residents' participation in the budgets. The consideration is critical owing to the fact that the City of Harare exhibits quick urban growth, heterogeneity of the inhabitants, with materialistic socio-economic goals, as well as politically volatile past experiences, all these which have in them an amount of influencing participation of the population in municipal state processes.

Additionally, the study sought to address the problem of casual employment, which is a prevalent segment of Harare's economy with more than 70% of individuals being engaged, as indicated in the 2020 Budget Report. Economic exposure may discourage individuals from fully utilizing their contribution to local administration, therefore how the strategy in local government will assist in addressing the needs that are unique in this population warrants to be studied. This research did not cover all the municipalities of Zimbabwe, but specifically the City of Harare to generate findings relevant to similar urban settings in the country and potentially in wider Southern Africa. The research also confined its examination of budget processes and citizen participation within the ambit of local government jurisdiction only, excluding national-level budgeting as well as wider political factors outside the City of Harare. Through a concentration on these specific areas, the research aims to provide accurate,

pragmatic steps that can help facilitate citizen involvement with a focus on the peculiarities of the City of Harare's political context.

### **1.8 Limitation of the Study**

Notwithstanding the clearly defined scope and target of this study, some limitations had to be noted. Above all, the fact that the study depended on qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and document analysis could impact the findings' generalizability. While qualitative research provides richly textured, locally situated information on the perceptions and experiences of the people in relation to participation with the budget, the interpretative nature of qualitative data raises questions on whether conclusions may be reliably extended to other sources or elsewhere in Harare. Citizen life experience is multi-dimensional and therefore could not represent the whole population from all regions of Zimbabwe due to the rich variety in socio-economic contexts in other cities and rural settlements. Therefore, although what the findings do is inform what the City of Harare's issues and its opportunities for involving citizens are, they need to be read from within the given context of local governance politics within the city.

A further critical limitation arises from the possibility of bias in participant recruitment and data collection. The research inherently favoured more active voices, e.g., those of well-educated or well-organized community members, over less active or more marginal groups. This is likely to result in a skewed perception of the contribution of citizens since not all segments of a demographic are likely to present their input or experience during data collection activities. Furthermore, with few resources and time, the study could hardly capture the long-term effect of the activities of citizen participation in Harare, since with time, the activities tend to expand and evolve significantly. This characteristic restricts the capacity to gauge the sustainability of the

measures undertaken or draw ultimate conclusions regarding their long-term efficiency. As a result, even though the study attempts to deliver an overall consideration of the reality with the participation of citizens in the City of Harare's budgeting, it was vital to consider these limitations and read the findings as context-dependent remarks instead of generally applicable solutions.

## **CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Literature review is an important basis for understanding the complex dynamics of citizens' budget participation with a focus on the case of the City of Harare in Zimbabwe. Conceptual frameworks such as Participatory Governance Theory and Social Capital Theory are discussed within this section with the aim of building knowledge regarding processes that reinforce civic engagement and how social networks become key facilitators of coordination among citizens and local government institutions. Additionally, it assesses empirical work critical of the strategies of the City of Harare to determine whether or not they work and what socio-political barriers limit genuine involvement. It further emphasizes crucial domains of inquiry absent, such as that of more sophisticated insight into how municipal-level political culture conditions perceptions and engagement and exploring the role of technological innovation in participatory government. Based on its comprehensive review of literature, the review establishes a firm foundation for the proposed research and articulates the urgent requirement for actionable interventions to encourage greater participation by citizens in Harare's local government.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Research on the involvement of citizens in budgeting in the City of Harare requires a range of theoretical concepts that can shape and direct the study. Two theories, Participatory Governance Theory and Social Capital Theory, are among the main theories that were applied by this study. The two theories can help allow for an analysis of dynamics of citizen participation in local government and budgeting where there are complexities and socio-political challenges.

### **2.2.1 Participatory Governance Theory**

Participatory Governance Theory is of the view that effective governance should include institutions that promote the active and meaningful participation of citizens in decision-making. The theory school of thought requires that governance is not a preserve of state actors alone but is rather an interactive process that includes other stakeholders like local communities, civil society organizations, and government institutions (Ansell & Gash, 2018). For Harare, the theory presents a model under which facilitators and inhibitors to citizen involvement in the budgeting process are conceptualized.

The tenets of the theory are supportive of recent international acceptance of participatory budgeting schemes whose goal is democratization of the budgeting process through giving the people power over directly affecting resources. Other experiments, including the participatory budgeting experiment conducted in Porto Alegre, Brazil, show how participatory government can create transparency and accountability for the advantage of a more equitable allocation of resources (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2018). In the City of Harare, bureaucratic and corruption walls limit successful participation of the citizens in budgeting processes, necessitating a study on how institutions of local governance can be reorganized to support genuine participatory processes.

The theory also supports the role of public institutions in establishing participatory systems that improve trust and citizenship participation by eliminating fears of tokenism in the local governance system (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2018). Through the application of Participatory Governance Theory, the study will critically examine to what extent the existing policies of the City of Harare comply with this theory and to what extent changes can be made to improve citizen participation in budgeting.

### **2.2.2. Social Capital Theory**

The second influential theoretical perspective used in this research is Social Capital Theory, which highlights the importance of social networks, values, and trust as fundamental dimensions that promote cooperation among individuals and communities (Putnam, 2000). In Harare, the theory explains how the social relationships and values of citizens within communities are capable of impacting citizens' propensity and capacity to engage in governance activities, for example, budgeting. Social capital exists at different levels, from social contacts within communities to more macro social contacts between civic groups and governments.

Social capital has been found in studies across different contexts in Africa to play a key role in fostering the development of civic participation and trust in government. For example, social capital has been found to make a substantial contribution to mobilization campaigns at the local level in Kenya, resulting in increased participation in governance at the local level (Kabeer & Khatun, 2018). In Harare, political instability and corruption over time that facilitated high trust levels for governments at the local level can undermine social capital and challenge collective action by citizens (Nyamunda, 2020). Understanding the manner in which social capital flows into citizen participation in budget preparation enabled this study to consider ways through which networks, contacts, and degrees of trust in neighbourhood levels can be made accessible by the local authority in order to promote higher involvement.

Moreover, Social Capital Theory has direct implications for determinants of effective citizens' participation strategy in Harare, presenting a notion about what kind of social networks may be fostered or used in order to enhance civic involvement (Putnam, 2000). Analysing where social capital overlaps with participatory governance will be in a position to determine implementable strategies for local governments to restore

citizen engagement in budgetary discussions. Both theoretical models are eventually core to the research, organizing what eventually is analysis of impediments to citizens' participation, quantifying the adequacy of current practices, and guiding possible recommendations to the City of Harare.

### **2.3 Strategies that are Used to Engage Citizens in Local Budgetary Processes**

Globally, there exists an international wave toward participatory budgeting as a reaction to calls for greater transparency and good governance. Participatory budgeting enables citizens to be involved in the process of creating the budget, hence ensuring public funds' transparency and accountability. Best practices, like that of Porto Alegre, demonstrate how the methodology can politicise the budget process by encouraging public debate and prioritizing local agenda items in budget allocations (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2018). It has attracted the interest of global institutions like the United Nations which has included participatory government in its list of priorities among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Particularly, Goal 16 of prioritizing inclusive decision-making and building peaceful and participatory societies (United Nations, 2015). These guidelines offer the foundations upon which local governments across the globe can frame citizen participation, allowing local governance practice to align with best practice worldwide.

At the continental level, most African nations like Kenya, Mozambique are starting to appreciate the significance of integrating citizens' participation in governance to serve the purpose of increasing accountability and service delivery. For example, it was revealed by the African Development Bank (2021) that good quality participation of citizens is critical in facilitating the budget process to be not only transparent but also responding to the demands of the citizens. Nations such as Kenya and Ghana have succeeded in setting up participatory budgetary processes intended to secure the

involvement of citizens. These techniques authenticate that if citizens are involved in the budgeting process, then this indicates a distribution of resources which is more inclusive and enhanced citizen trust of government. These are outcomes that can be imitated immediately by Zimbabwe, and it is conceivable that such methods can be tailored towards its own specific socio-political needs.

Regionally, Zimbabwe's political problems heavily determine the City councils in Zimbabwe like of Chitungwiza Municipal response to civic participation. Political instability strengthened by inherent inefficiencies in the system has fostered an environment in which confidence in local authorities is diminishing among citizens. Even in the presence of constitutional stipulations that guarantee participatory inclusion in governance, citizens are predominantly not made to believe that they have a say in budget spaces (Economic Commission for Africa, 2023). The measures utilized by some Urban local authorities like consultations, public debates, and social media to engage more citizens have been utilized, yet in most cases, they do not lead to substantive citizen involvement (Jephias, Mapuva, and Takabika Tendai 2020). Studies have also indicated that while the local government makes attempts to establish arenas of interaction, these are usually undermined by bureaucratic lag and subsequent lack of follow-through, with the result that they end up having no effect and leaving individuals feeling isolated and ignored.

Organisational level, the Urban local authorities Councils like City of Gweru, faced with numerous system problems that constrain efficient citizen participation (Chirisa, Innocent, et al 2019). Even though the Council strives to interact with citizens via various forums, including public hearings and virtual activism, there exists valid fears of how vigorous such interactions are. Widespread civil society observation is that most residents view these as cosmetic, with consultations being conducted more in an

attempt to be law-abiding rather than to truly delegate real control over budget decisions. The people are disenfranchised and think that decisions taken do not align with community interests, especially in dealing with issues that burn the hearts of more than 70% of the population living in informal jobs (Jephias, Mapuva, and Takabika Tendai 2020). Such a populace requires focused investment in social services and infrastructure but is not afforded effective participation, with budget allocations being diverted away from the concerns of the majority of the people in Harare.

#### **2.4 Effectiveness of the Strategies Employed in Fostering Citizen Participation in Local Budgetary Processes**

At a global level, the discussion of effective participatory governance highlights the importance of creating clear, accountable, and responsive structures. There is ample literature that supports the point that without such structures, citizen participation remains superficial with limited effects on governance outcomes. Instances from experiences of participatory budgeting practices globally indicate that inclusive approaches can provide good governance characteristics, including increased public trust and accountability (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2018). Studies of participatory budgeting have also highlighted the need not just to consult the citizenry but to also ensure that they have their inputs channelled into actual impacts on budgeting considerations. This is a valid assumption for assessment of the success of Harare's measures based on international standards proven elsewhere.

On a continental level, experiences of participatory budgeting in several African nations have shown a positive result based on greater civic participation. These successful experiences in Ghana and Kenya, the African Development Bank (2021) argues, have resulted in enhanced public trust and a fairer distribution of resources, having immense potential for Zimbabwe in the future if those mechanisms are adopted

and tailored. Yet, the impact of such an approach is normally subject to moderation by more universal socio-political factors. For South Africa, deeply rooted factors such as pervasive corruption and distrust in government institutions can play a substantial role in motivating citizens to participate in the budget-making process. The Economic Commission for Africa (2023) identified that the absence of transparency and accountability in local government institutions, presented a window of opportunity for getting substantial citizen inputs. An experience in local authorities emphasized the need to look beyond the universal elements of citizen involvement, assessing what present frameworks could bring to the table with regards to being reworked toward local dynamics (Marumahoko, Sylvester 2023).

Regionally, there is an outer Bulawayo, Chitungwiza environment in which to operate that informs citizens' engagement in national governance. Both community accounts and studies noted that most participatory activities were beleaguered by problems. There was an attempt to establish a participatory framework for citizens' opinions, although the lack of subsequent feedback after consultations between communities tends to lower the perception of usefulness from such interactions. Citizens further reported that the openness with which their input was utilized in budget-making had created cynicism on the effectiveness of such initiatives (Nyamunda, 2020). This reflected a deeper systemic problem within the local government system that, even when established to engage citizens, breaks promises and therefore shuts out increased participation.

Even at an organizational level, the local City Council has to contend with its own structural limitations that hinder the success of its engagement efforts. The initiatives of the Council towards enhancing citizen participation appear incomplete, lacking the institutional will to make substantial changes. Even after organizing community

meetings and utilizing online forums for engagement, the tactics of the Council had a tendency to illustrate a compliance-driven strategy rather than a genuine desire to hear the citizens. Research indicated that the outcome is a participatory process that is viewed as tokenistic in which participation by citizens was superficial and failed to translate into meaningful influence over budget priorities (Marumahoko, Sylvester, 2023). For citizens who were mostly disenfranchised from decision-making, such superficial participation would fail to create the trust or engagement needed for effective governance. The excessive reliance on unofficial work among Harare residents exacerbated this problem, as their immediate needs were either pushed to the backburner or managed ineffectively because of the absence of real feedback from the municipal government regarding budgeting.

## **2.5 Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of the Strategies used by city councils to Enhance Citizen Participation in Local Budgetary Processes**

Worldwide, the consensus among practitioners and researchers was that effective citizen participation depended on a sequence of internal and external factors such as the sociopolitical environment, the institutional framework, and methods of establishing trust between citizens and the authorities (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2018). Examples of experiences in participatory governance forms in different environments demonstrated that citizens' participation in success relied on the desire by local governments to give power and resources to citizens, hence cultivating a culture of participation (Ansell & Gash, 2018). This argument suggests that although participatory methods can be utilized, their effectiveness in practice can be greatly determined by wider contexts such as political stability, citizens' trust, and the socio-economic context in which governance is being practiced.

At the continental level, African countries like South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique are faced with specific challenges that affect participation by individuals. Issues of entrenched political patronage, corruption, and long-term suspicion of state institutions are endemic to the majority of African states, disenfranchising the role of citizenry in state-level government decision-making (African Development Bank, 2021). In Zimbabwe, persistent economic uncertainty and political instability have also fostered a culture of distrust between citizens and governments, thus stifling effective participation in budget debates. As the 2023 Economic Commission for Africa report attests, the lack of transparent processes and accountability frameworks is a significant setback to participatory governance, and this results in citizen disillusionment with their capacity to shape decisions (ECA, 2023). As a result, knowing these factors is crucial to analyse the existing strategy being used by the City Councils and decide to what extent they enable genuine citizen participation.

Regionally, the socio-political context of Zimbabwe largely influences the success of local governance. Political marginalization and historical grievances have led to an attitude among citizens that their participation is futile, and it thus becomes challenging to involve them in real participation in budgetary issues. Empirical studies indicate that citizens feel disenfranchised and cynical about government institutions because they believe there is corruption within local government. It was reported that people who take part in public consultations often complained that their contributions were not considered or implemented (Nyamunda, 2020). This disillusionment is only one reflection of a wider trend seen in many participatory programs across the region, where efforts at citizen engagement do not yield concrete results because of a deep-seated culture of bureaucratic lethargy and political patronage.

At an organization level, its internal culture and structures dictate policies for the City Council. Meaningful participation of citizens is undermined by bureaucratic inefficiency, insufficient resources, and ineffective communication channels. The internal mechanisms of the Council tend to be inflexible, unable to generate the dynamism required in addressing citizen needs, thus disabling progress towards actual participation. Additionally, the lack of any official mechanism for giving feedback to let individuals know how their participation shaped budgetary decisions is also a factor for a feeling of disengagement. Additionally, even if participatory programs do exist, unless sufficient outreach activities are undertaken or the population remains poorly aware, they can prove ineffective, constraining citizen participation to a small number who are often already involved and thus sustaining exclusionary forces.

## **2.6 Strategies for Improving Citizen Participation in Local Budgetary Processes**

Globally, international models of participatory governance that work suggests local governments looking to higher levels of citizen participation. For example, efforts emphasizing openness, responsibility, and consistent dialogue between the state and the people have played a central role in cities such as Porto Alegre, Brazil (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2018). These models advocate for local authorities to establish open channels of communication, through which there can be constant dialogue, instead of random consultations. There, City of Harare could have routine town hall meetings that not just seek comment from citizens but also make citizens aware of how budget comments were being used in decision-making.

At the continental level, effective approaches in consolidating the engagement of citizens are generally engaged in enhancing institutional mechanisms facilitating participatory budgeting. Insights derived from other countries on the African continent indicated that organizing collaboration among community associations,

municipalities, and civil society organizations could enable establishing a synergic environment where authentic participation is possible (African Development Bank, 2021). For the City Council and Municipals, civic education and community mobilization NGOs involvement in partnership building is able to increase sensitization of the public on participatory processes, leading to more citizen participation. In addition, capacity-building programs are able to equip the members of the community with skills and knowledge required to effectively undertake the budgeting process, hence their ability to effectively lobby for needs.

Geographically, City of Harare also has much to gain from using technology in a bid to increase citizen participation. Having online forums through which budget information is posted, comments are invited, and discussion forums can be used to increase participation, particularly among the youth who are more comfortable with online communication. Local authorities in most of the region have been able to use social media and mobile apps to create dialogue as well as transparency. Similarly, City Councils must contemplate the creation of online discussion platforms where people can interact with budget information in real time to enable an interactive exchange that empowers citizens to share their own views and make an impact in local government.

At the organizational level, the City Councils in Zimbabwe basically focusing on Harare could further dismantle internal obstacles to effective citizen participation by embracing a culture of responsiveness and inclusiveness. This involves not only sensitizing staff to the importance of citizen participation in the budgeting process but also incorporating mechanisms for feedback into the work of the Council. For instance, constant review of participatory programs must be done, with emphasis on the results and citizen feedback received. Additionally, the creation of a Citizen Advisory

Committee can incorporate citizen participation into the budget process, allowing for an orderly platform for the articulation of people's voices to be taken on board in policy-making. Institutionalizing these approaches creates legitimacy and fosters public trust, eventually creating a stronger participatory system of government.

## 2.7 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is an essential component of a research study as it visually represents the relationships between the variables being studied. For the research on strategies for enhancing citizen participation in budgetary processes of devolved local governments in Zimbabwe, specifically focusing on the City of Harare, the conceptual framework consists of independent variables that influence citizen participation and dependent variables that reflect the outcomes of such participation.

### Conceptual Framework Diagram

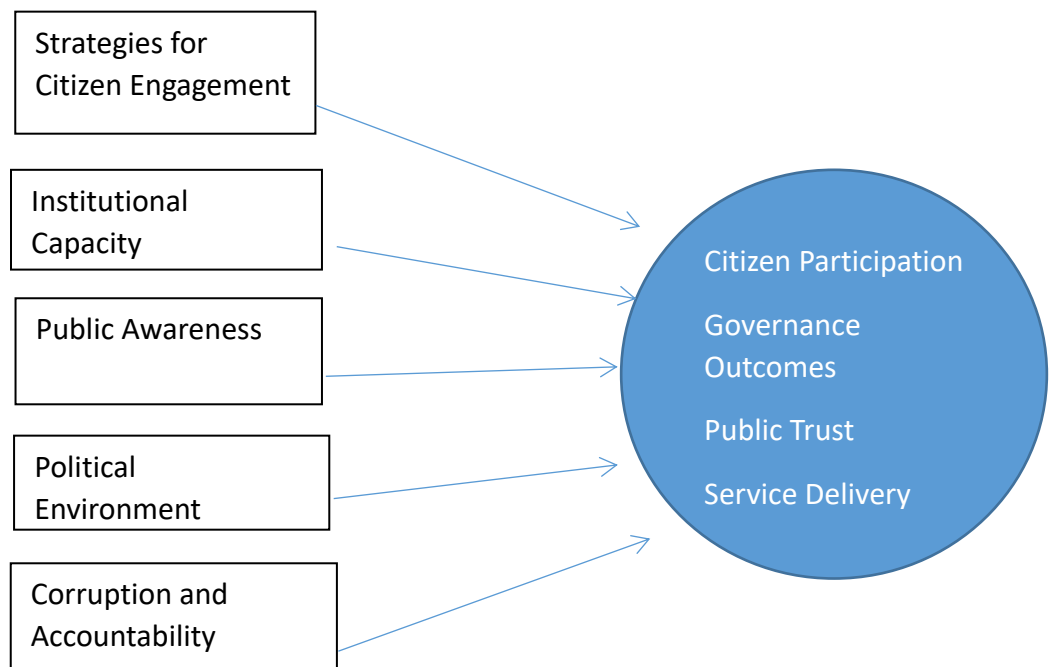


Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Model

Source: (The researcher 2025)

The conceptual framework explains the interdependency between independent and dependent variables that affect the participation of citizens in the City of Harare's budget-making process. Independent variables such as citizen participation strategies, institutional capacity, public awareness, political environment, and corruption are the determinants of the level of citizen participation. The strategies of citizen participation include means like public consultations and online forums, which provide avenues for community participation, and institutional capacity reflecting resources and willingness of the local government to ensure participation. Public awareness is a matter of perception by citizens regarding their rights and how important their participation is, with the political context explaining the stability and openness that prompt such participation.

In addition, corruption affects public trust and perception toward local government, such that increased corruption deters citizen participation. Outcome variables of the quality of citizen participation, governance, public trust, and service delivery are likely to have positive effects due to effective participation by citizens. As there is increased participation by citizens, the quality of governance is supposed to increase with characteristics of increased transparency of resource allocation and increased accountability. This interactive engagement produces public trust in local governments and enhancing provision of services to cater to citizens' needs and in the process creating a cycle of feedback through which active citizens check authorities such that ongoing development in governance occurs.

## **2.8 Research Gap**

The available wealth of information about the involvement of citizens in the budget, most especially with the devolved urban authorities in Zimbabwe, demonstrates various gaps worthy of further exploration. Notwithstanding an increasing amount of

literature that has recognized participatory governance as critical and the implications for public finance governance (Sharma & Mathew, 2019; Bhattacharya & Koo, 2021), existing research specifically dealing with the nuances of citizen participation in the City of Harare is limited. The majority of research tends towards analysing government on the national scale or overall participation trends among citizens without considering certain socio-political and economic conditions influencing Zimbabwean local governance (Gwanbata et al., 2023). For example, while examples of experiments such as participatory budgeting have been implemented in a variety of different world contexts (e.g, Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2018; Alemayehu et al., 2022), limited empirical research exists on analysing the everyday challenges and barriers to practice among citizens in Harare in participating in local budgeting practices. As many as 70% of the inhabitants of Harare are employed in the informal economy, but literature in this regard has not included serious examinations of how particular interests and demands of this population are addressed by local governance (City of Harare, 2020). Current research has not given serious consideration to the institutional capacity and effectiveness of current policies of the local government that seek to promote citizen engagement (Mpofu & Mawere, 2021).

Although participatory mechanisms have begun to surface, citizens view such efforts as tokenistic, with the resulting skepticism and disillusionment (Gondola et al., 2022). Additionally, the nexus of socio-economic determinants, including poverty rates and trust in government, is underexplored; i.e., how these determinants affect the success of participatory mechanisms in creating a good civic engagement climate in Harare (Ndlovu & Dube, 2023). Empirical evidence is currently non-existent on how the specific historical, political, and socio-economic environment of Zimbabwe affects citizen attitudes towards engagement in budgetary processes, implying that there is a

need for a more sophisticated understanding of these dynamics (Moyo, 2024). In addition, the absence of synthesis between qualitative findings and quantitative data on citizen participation approaches is a major research gap. Earlier studies are primarily employing one-dimensional approaches that either quantify rates of participation or qualitatively explore citizen experience without establishing a comprehensive understanding of how these dimensions are interdependent in the specific context of the City of Harare (Mavhunga & Mahanya, 2023).

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about extreme changes in communication modes and citizen engagement, which have not been adequately addressed in research literature (Tshuma & Nyoni, 2023). As most local authorities adapted their strategies to accommodate lockdowns and social distancing, it is important to study how such adaptations impacted the participation of citizens in the budgeting process and therefore provide timely insight for research scholarship. Sealing all these knowledge gaps would render the most effective inputs for maximizing citizen participation in local governance, hence better accountability and delivery of services in Harare's peculiar socio-economic setting.

Another significant research area that has been underexplored is how technological advancement impacts citizens' participation in budgeting issues in Harare. Utilization of digital tools and platforms has emerged as a significant factor to be reckoned with across the globe, bringing governance within reach and involving people. There does, however, remain a comparative deficiency of empirical evidence precisely on how such types of technological advancements, such as mobile applications and web platforms, have been utilized or adopted within the local government infrastructure in Zimbabwe (Chikumba & Dube, 2023). Literature elsewhere in other developing nations has described the potential of smart application to boost transparency, simplify

communication, and promote greater citizens' involvement (Kharanto et al., 2020). For Harare, a city where a high percentage of the population is involved in informal economic activity, understanding how online platforms can bring local governments and citizens together is a valuable research opportunity. The evolution of participatory online and mobile approaches with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic added new dimensions to participation; none of these have been critically assessed from the effectiveness, accessibility, and inclusivity lenses (Chiwariidzo et al., 2024). Carrying out studies on how best to integrate technology into participatory budgeting would provide lessons toward better public involvement in Harare, particularly in light of its heterogeneity of socio-economic profiles and the state of digital literacy among the people.

Moreover, although a number of studies highlighted the essence of transparency and accountability in municipal governance, more focus was placed on researching the implications of local political culture and citizens' perceptions of Harare's governance (Ndlovu et al., 2023). The political history of Zimbabwe, including authoritarianism, political violence, and institutional corruption, has resulted in a society with a pervasive culture of disbelief in government institutions (Tizora & Nehanda, 2023). Therefore, this widespread cynicism has long-term effects on citizens' participation in budgeting processes. Therefore, research at the intersection of local political culture, citizen attitudes, and participatory approaches is essential for formulating an inclusive participatory model (Kandawire & Chivasa, 2022). Understanding how citizen attitudes are influenced by previous grievances and socio-political contexts allows policymakers to formulate more effective strategies that recognize and counter these attitudes. This integrated process is especially apt in the case of Harare, where

residents' experiences and histories are centrally located in their engagement with local government processes.

Additionally, there is a lack of research focus on social dynamics and power relations in communities that affect citizens' engagement in the budgeting process. Social stratification, leadership trends in communities, and intra-communities' conflict may have significant effects on the way various socioeconomic groups access and engage in local government (Makoni & Muchinda, 2023). Evidence also indicates that marginal groups, including lower socio-economic class groups, are bound to be unable to have their voice heard in local government environments, leading to skewed distribution of resources and services (Mnangagwa & Chirimuuta, 2024). Such social realities must be realized to recognize participatory barriers and incorporate the voice of the worst-hit in decision-making. There is an urgent need for qualitative research papers that examine such community-based determinants in the example of Harare's citizen involvement in budgeting processes, and how community networks, intra-power dynamics, and local leadership impact participation in general. By examining these factors, research can reveal underlying social layers that compel or constrain effective citizen engagement in local government systems, leading to more responsive and equitable budget systems.

## **2.9 Summary**

In conclusion, the literature review highlights the need to examine several dimensions of theoretical and empirical citizen participation in local government, and in particular the need for participatory and transparent budgeting processes to account for the experiences of the richly diverse population of Harare. Whereas the existing literature

provides an insight window into international best practices and issues faced within the Zimbabwean environment, it also proposes relevant gaps to be researched, notably the influence of socio-economic determinants, political culture, and technological innovations on citizens' participation. The research urges policymakers and the Harare local government to create bespoke strategies that consider such gaps to include learnings in other environments so that more participatory involvement by the citizens in the budgeting processes will lead to an accountable and responsible government framework.

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous section provided a comprehensive literature review on citizen participation in budgetary processes, focusing on the dynamics in the City of Harare, Zimbabwe. It examined relevant theoretical frameworks, such as Participatory Governance Theory and Social Capital Theory, while identifying empirical gaps regarding civic engagement. This methodology section outlines the research strategy employed to investigate citizen engagement in budget-making, utilizing a mixed-method design. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods, the study aims to explore the complexities of citizen involvement within the unique socio-economic and political context of Harare. Structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions were employed to assess levels of engagement and identify barriers and facilitators to civic participation, guided by ethical considerations to ensure participant rights and the reliability of findings.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of citizen participation in budgetary processes within the City of Harare. Mixed-methods research combined the strengths of numerical analysis and qualitative inquiry, allowing for triangulation of findings to enhance validity, reliability, and credibility (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021). By employing both approaches, the study ensured that statistical trends could be contextualized through the lived experiences of participants, providing a multidimensional understanding of citizen engagement in local governance (Flick, 2020).

The study was guided by a descriptive research framework, which is particularly suitable for capturing and documenting current trends, patterns, and phenomena within a defined population (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). Descriptive research enabled the systematic presentation of facts, perceptions, and behaviours related to citizen participation in budgeting processes. In the context of Zimbabwe, where decentralization and local governance reforms are ongoing, this design allowed for the identification of gaps, barriers, and opportunities in civic engagement, providing a baseline for future policy interventions (Mutasa & Chitiga, 2021).

The quantitative component of the study was designed to measure the frequency, scope, and demographic variation of citizen participation. Using structured survey instruments, the study collected numerical data on citizens' knowledge of local budgeting processes, their participation levels, trust in local government, and perceived barriers to engagement (Fowler, 2019). Quantitative data allowed for comparisons across different wards, socio-economic groups, and gender categories, enabling a clear assessment of disparities in participation. The descriptive framework supported the analysis of relationships between independent variables such as age, education, and income, and dependent variables like engagement levels, which contributed to a more nuanced understanding of participation dynamics (World Bank, 2023).

The qualitative component adopted a phenomenological approach, which focused on capturing the lived experiences, perceptions, and motivations of key stakeholders in local governance (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with ward councillors, senior officials from the Harare City Council, representatives of civil society organizations, and active community members, ensuring that perspectives from multiple levels of participation

were included (Schugurensky, 2024). The phenomenological design allowed the researcher to explore subjective experiences of engagement, providing depth and context to the numerical findings obtained from the survey.

By integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, the study leveraged methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of its findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021). This integration enabled the study to answer both ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions, identifying measurable patterns in participation while simultaneously exploring the factors that influenced these patterns. The approach also ensured comprehensive coverage of the research objectives, allowing for actionable insights into strategies for enhancing citizen involvement in Harare’s devolved budgetary processes (Mutasa & Chitiga, 2021).

Finally, ethical considerations were incorporated throughout the research design. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Ethical compliance was guided by national and institutional standards, including the Zimbabwean Research Council’s requirements for conducting social research involving human subjects (Transparency International Zimbabwe, 2023). By embedding ethical safeguards within the design, the study ensured the protection of participants while maintaining the integrity and credibility of the research process.

### **3.3 Population and Sampling**

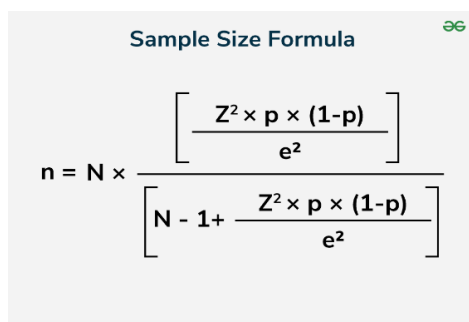
#### **3.3.1 Population**

The target population for this study comprises residents of the City of Harare, which is Zimbabwe's capital and largest urban centre. According to the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) 2022 Census, Harare has a population of approximately 1.5 million people. The city is characterised by a diverse demographic profile, including different age groups, ethnicities, educational levels, and socio-economic backgrounds, which reflects the heterogeneity typical of a rapidly urbanising developing country (ZIMSTAT, 2022).

This research specifically focuses on households that are eligible to participate in local governance processes, as identified through voter registration and electoral roll data provided by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC, 2023). This subset is particularly relevant because the study seeks to assess citizen participation in local government budgetary processes, which are largely influenced by residents with voting and participatory rights under Zimbabwe's devolution framework.

A critical justification for selecting this population lies in the city's large proportion of informal sector workers estimated at over 70% who are often underrepresented in formal planning and budgeting processes (Mupedziswa & Gumbo, 2021). Capturing perspectives from this segment is essential for a holistic understanding of participatory challenges and opportunities in devolved governance. The urban population of Harare therefore provides a rich, varied, and policy-relevant base for investigating how different demographic groups engage with and perceive local government budgeting.

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, and as such, the sample size was determined separately for the quantitative and qualitative phases, with appropriate justification to ensure validity and reliability. For the quantitative component, a sample of 322 households was determined using Cochran's Sample Size Formula (1977), which is suitable for large populations. The formula is applied at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, assuming a response distribution of 50% to ensure maximum variability. The formula used is:



The diagram shows the formula for sample size calculation. It is titled "Sample Size Formula" with a small infinity symbol in the top right corner. The formula is presented as follows:

$$n = N \times \frac{\left[ \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{e^2} \right]}{\left[ N - 1 + \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{e^2} \right]}$$

Using this formula, the calculated sample size was 322 households. This ensured the results are statistically significant and generalizable to Harare's residential population. The sample was distributed proportionally across various administrative wards in Harare to capture a broad representation of views regarding citizen participation in local government budgeting processes.

For the qualitative component, a purposive sample of 15 key informants was selected based on their relevance, experience, and proximity to the participatory budgeting process. These include five local government officials, five civil society organisation representatives, and five active community residents who have engaged in budget consultation meetings or civic forums. This qualitative sample size was adequate for achieving data saturation, as noted by Guest, Namey, and Chen (2020), who argue that most thematic saturation occurs within the first 12 interviews when the study

population is relatively homogeneous in relation to the topic. The combined sample sizes from both components strengthen the study’s validity, as they allow for broad generalizations from the quantitative strand while also capturing nuanced experiences and perceptions from the qualitative strand.

Table 3. 1: Summary of Sample Sizes and Justifications

<b>Method</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Population Description</b>	<b>Justification</b>
<b>Quantitative</b>	322 households	Harare residential population	Determined using Cochran’s formula at 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error; ensures representativeness
<b>Qualitative</b>	15 key informants	5 local officials, 5 civil society actors, 5 active citizens	Purposive sampling; sufficient for thematic saturation and gathering detailed insights (Guest et al., 2020)

### 3.3.2 Sampling

In the quantitative phase of the study, stratified sampling was employed to select households from the electoral registers of Harare districts. This technique was particularly appropriate for a mixed-methods approach, as it allowed for a nuanced understanding of the population by ensuring that diverse subgroups were adequately represented in the sample (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). The population was divided into distinct strata based on demographic characteristics, including age, gender, socio-economic status, and geographic location. Subsequently, simple random

sampling was applied within each stratum to select participants, enhancing the representativeness of the sample and ensuring that every subgroup had a proportional chance of inclusion (Creswell & Creswell, 2020).

The use of stratified sampling offered several advantages. Primarily, it ensured that key population subgroups were proportionately included, improving the external validity and generalizability of the findings (Thompson, 2022). In the context of Harare's local governance, this method enabled the study to capture diverse perspectives regarding citizen participation in budgetary processes, reflecting both the experiences of urban and peri-urban communities as well as variations across socio-economic groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). Furthermore, stratified sampling facilitated the identification of trends and patterns across different demographic groups. By comparing participation levels among specific strata, the study was able to uncover disparities or challenges faced by distinct population segments, such as youth engagement versus elderly participation or men versus women (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2019). This added layer of analysis was essential for understanding civic engagement dynamics and provided insights that could guide targeted interventions to enhance participation in budget-making processes.

Stratified sampling also complemented the mixed-methods approach by allowing the quantitative component to capture a broad spectrum of citizen experiences, which was subsequently enriched by qualitative insights. By addressing the diversity within the population, the study generated robust and representative findings that could inform policy and practice on participatory governance within the City of Harare. In the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select key informants who possessed the most relevant knowledge and experience regarding local governance and citizen engagement in budgeting processes. This approach enabled the identification

of participants capable of providing rich, in-depth insights rather than broad generalizations (Carey, 2013; Steinberg, 2015). Key informants included local government officials, ward councillors, representatives of civil society organizations, and active community members, each offering unique perspectives on the challenges and opportunities associated with citizen participation in budget formulation and implementation.

Purposive sampling was complemented by snowball sampling, in which initial respondents recommended additional knowledgeable informants. This method enhanced the depth of qualitative information collected and ensured that the sample included diverse voices and experiences pertinent to participatory governance (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). By strategically selecting participants, the study ensured that critical insights into citizen engagement, barriers, and facilitators were captured, providing a comprehensive understanding of the qualitative dimensions of the research problem (Ritchie et al., 2019). The application of purposive sampling was essential for exploratory qualitative research, as the study aimed to develop a rich narrative and deep understanding of phenomena rather than achieve statistical generalizability. By focusing on individuals directly involved in local governance, the research was able to reflect the lived experiences of citizens, uncovering the sophisticated social processes, institutional constraints, and community dynamics that shaped participation in the City of Harare's budgeting process. This approach enabled the study to generate actionable insights on enhancing citizen engagement and improving the effectiveness of devolved governance structures in Zimbabwe.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instruments**

Data collection instruments were central to this study, as they provided the means to acquire the information necessary to answer the research questions and achieve the

study objectives. This research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative instruments to capture both measurable patterns of citizen participation and the deeper contextual dynamics of civic engagement (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). The tools included structured questionnaires, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs), each designed to provide unique insights into the drivers, barriers, and manifestations of citizen engagement in budgetary processes within the City of Harare.

Structured questionnaires formed the primary quantitative instrument, enabling the systematic measurement of citizen participation. The questionnaires included closed-ended items that assessed residents' levels of awareness of local government policies, frequency of engagement with budgeting processes, attendance at public meetings, submission of proposals or feedback, and perceptions of influence on budget decisions. Household demographic characteristics and socio-economic status were also captured to examine patterns of participation across different population groups. This quantitative approach allowed for statistical analysis of participation trends, enabling identification of participation levels and comparison across wards and demographic strata (Fowler, 2022; Nakabugo et al., 2024). The questionnaires were administered through face-to-face interviews and telephone surveys to maximize coverage, improve response rates, and ensure inclusion of residents across diverse socio-economic and geographic contexts.

Structured interviews complemented the questionnaires, particularly for participants with literacy challenges or limited familiarity with formal survey instruments. Enumerators read questions verbatim, ensuring clarity and reducing the risk of misinterpretation. Responses were systematically coded to permit quantitative analysis while also capturing the experiences of marginalized groups (Elele et al., 2022). This

method strengthened the inclusivity of the study and provided contextual detail to support the interpretation of survey data, revealing how socio-economic and institutional factors influenced participation.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including ward councillors, community leaders, and local government officials. Using a pre-determined set of questions with room for open-ended follow-ups, these interviews explored participants' perceptions of transparency, inclusivity, responsiveness, and trust in local governance (Charmaz, 2018; Adams, 2021). This qualitative instrument allowed the study to capture the subtleties of citizen participation that could not be quantified, including motivations, barriers, and the social dynamics shaping engagement in budgetary processes.

Focus group discussions further enriched qualitative data collection, providing a forum for residents to interact, share experiences, and reflect collectively on participation in local budgeting. FGDs revealed community-level perspectives, including shared challenges and points of consensus or disagreement regarding citizen involvement. The group setting encouraged the emergence of insights that individual interviews might not capture, offering a more holistic understanding of participation patterns across demographic and social groups (Krueger & Casey, 2021).

Through the combined use of these instruments, the study measured citizen participation both quantitatively through attendance, submissions, frequency of engagement, and awareness indicators and qualitatively through perceptions, experiences, and community-level insights. This triangulated approach ensured a comprehensive, nuanced understanding of civic engagement in the City of Harare's

devolved budgetary processes, enhancing the reliability, validity, and depth of the study's findings.

### **3.5 Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted prior to the main data collection to assess the reliability, validity, and overall suitability of the research instruments used to investigate strategies for enhancing citizen participation in Harare City Council's budgetary processes. The primary objective of the pilot was to identify and correct potential ambiguities, technical flaws, and conceptual gaps in the questionnaire and interview guide. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), pilot studies enable researchers to evaluate the feasibility of research designs and determine the appropriateness of data collection methods within a given context.

In this study, the pilot involved 15 participants drawn from community representatives, residents' associations, and small business operators located in areas under Harare City Council's jurisdiction. These participants shared similar characteristics with the target population but were excluded from the final sample to avoid duplication. The pilot helped to test the clarity, logical flow, and relevance of the questions, as well as the accessibility of the language used, ensuring that the instruments were easily understood by respondents with diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds.

Feedback obtained during the pilot phase indicated the need for minor adjustments to improve comprehension and flow. Some participants suggested replacing administrative terms such as "budgetary frameworks" and "fiscal accountability mechanisms" with simpler equivalents like "budget planning process" and "how money is managed," respectively. Additionally, open-ended questions were refined to encourage respondents to share practical experiences and suggestions on how citizen

engagement in the budgetary process could be improved. As Bryman (2021) notes, incorporating participant feedback during instrument refinement enhances content validity by ensuring alignment with the study's objectives.

Reliability testing was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.85, demonstrating a high level of reliability and consistency among the measured variables. Taber (2018) asserts that a coefficient of 0.70 or higher is acceptable for social science research. These results confirmed that the instrument items were well-structured and capable of generating dependable data on factors influencing citizen participation in municipal budgeting. Following these findings, minor modifications were made before administering the instruments to the main sample. The successful completion of the pilot study provided confidence that the data collection tools were both valid and reliable for exploring strategies to strengthen citizen participation in Harare City Council's budgetary processes.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection was conducted after obtaining formal approval from the Harare City Council and the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, ensuring adherence to institutional and ethical research standards. Prior to commencing fieldwork, the researcher introduced the study to key stakeholders, including ward councillors, residents' associations, and community development officers, to explain the purpose of the research and emphasize issues of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data protection. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), obtaining institutional consent and participant approval enhances the ethical credibility and legitimacy of social research.

The data collection process took place over a two-week period, strategically scheduled to coincide with community consultation sessions and budget feedback meetings. Questionnaires were distributed in person by the researcher and two trained assistants familiar with the local governance context and community languages, ensuring clear communication and high response rates. The face-to-face approach also allowed for clarification of questions and immediate feedback from respondents, minimizing non-response bias and misinterpretation.

For participants with limited literacy, the enumerators read the questions aloud and accurately recorded their responses to promote inclusivity. As Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) emphasize, in-person administration of questionnaires enhances the completeness and reliability of responses, especially in community-based research settings. In addition to questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants, including council officials, ward committee members, and civic leaders, to obtain deeper qualitative insights into challenges and strategies for improving citizen participation in municipal budgeting. These interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes and were held in neutral, accessible venues such as council offices and community halls to encourage open dialogue and participant comfort.

Ethical standards were rigorously maintained throughout the data collection process. Participants were informed of their rights, including the freedom to withdraw at any stage without penalty. To preserve anonymity, no identifying details such as names or ward identifiers were recorded on the questionnaires. All data were stored securely and made accessible only to the researcher. The research process adhered to ethical principles of integrity, respect, and confidentiality as stipulated in the Zimbabwe Research Council (ZRC, 2023) guidelines. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2021) observe, adherence to ethical research practices not only safeguards participant welfare

but also strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. By following these procedures, the data collection phase was completed successfully, generating credible, valid, and ethically sound information for analyzing strategies to enhance citizen participation in Harare City Council's budgetary processes.

### **3.7 Analysis and Organization of Data**

Data presentation and analysis in this study adopted a mixed-methods strategy, consistent with the integrated approach used to investigate citizen engagement in budget-making processes in the City of Harare. Quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires and structured interviews were analysed using statistical tools, including descriptive and inferential techniques, with the aid of software such as SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive analysis was conducted on key demographic variables, citizen participation levels, and awareness of local governance processes, enabling the identification of trends, patterns, and disparities across different population groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). The results were presented in tables, bar charts, and pie charts, which facilitated clear visualization of the data, allowing stakeholders and policymakers to interpret findings efficiently and make informed decisions regarding citizen engagement initiatives.

Further, inferential statistical tests, including t-tests and chi-square analyses, were employed to examine correlations between demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, and socio-economic status and levels of civic participation. These analyses provided insights into the factors that influenced citizen engagement in local governance and budgeting processes, offering evidence of statistically significant relationships between participant characteristics and their participation behaviours (Field, 2019). The rigorous application of both descriptive and inferential statistics ensured that the findings were reliable and allowed for generalizable conclusions

regarding patterns of civic engagement across Harare's wards, thus strengthening the study's external validity.

Qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were analysed using thematic analysis, which involved systematic coding and categorization of responses to uncover significant patterns and meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The analysis followed a multi-stage process: first, initial coding was conducted to identify notable concepts and recurring ideas; second, these codes were grouped to construct overarching themes that aligned with the study's research objectives; and finally, themes were refined to ensure coherence, depth, and alignment with the broader context of citizen engagement in local governance (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2019). Thematic analysis allowed the research to capture the complexity of social phenomena, including perceptions, motivations, and barriers influencing participation in budget-making processes.

Qualitative findings were integrated with quantitative results through narrative description and the use of verbatim quotations from participants, thereby providing contextual depth and enriching the interpretation of numerical trends. This triangulation of data enhanced the validity and reliability of the research findings, as patterns observed in quantitative analysis could be corroborated, explained, or nuanced by qualitative insights (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2020). The combined analysis also facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the facilitators and obstacles to citizen engagement in budget processes, enabling the research to offer actionable recommendations for improving participatory governance within the City of Harare. The integrative approach ensured that both measurable trends and nuanced experiential perspectives were accounted for, providing a solid empirical foundation for policy and practice aimed at enhancing inclusive and effective local governance.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

Ethical considerations formed a foundational component of this study, ensuring that the research was conducted responsibly, transparently, and with respect for participants—particularly given the sensitive nature of public participation in governance and municipal budgeting. Research involving citizen engagement in local government carries potential ethical challenges, including fear of reprisal, discomfort in expressing political opinions, or concerns about confidentiality. Therefore, strict adherence to ethical principles was essential throughout the study (Israel & Hay, 2020). This research was guided by the three core ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, which collectively informed the study’s design, data collection, and reporting processes. Respect for persons was operationalized by ensuring that all participants were fully informed about the study’s purpose, scope, and procedures before participating. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, who was assured of their right to withdraw at any stage without negative consequences. This approach protected participants’ autonomy, dignity, and freedom of choice while preventing coercion or undue influence that might arise from socio-economic disparities or community hierarchies (American Psychological Association, 2019).

The principle of beneficence was observed by minimizing potential harm while maximizing benefits to participants and communities. The study instruments were carefully designed to avoid questions that could cause emotional distress or political discomfort. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the process. Confidentiality measures included the use of participant codes rather than personal identifiers, and all data were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. These safeguards were particularly important in the socio-political context of Zimbabwe, where citizens may be reluctant to openly critique local authorities for

fear of repercussions (Mavhunga & Mahanya, 2023). By anticipating and mitigating these risks, the study protected participants' psychological and social well-being while encouraging honest and reflective responses.

The principle of justice was upheld by ensuring equitable participation and fair distribution of the research's benefits and burdens. Particular effort was made to include marginalized and underrepresented groups such as women, youth, and low-income residents whose voices are often excluded from formal participatory processes. Engaging these diverse voices not only enhanced the validity and representativeness of the findings but also reflected the ethical imperative of inclusivity and fairness in participatory governance (Israel & Hay, 2020). The study ultimately sought to contribute to local policy reforms that strengthen citizen participation and transparency in Harare City Council's budgetary processes, thus benefitting the wider community.

Additionally, professional integrity and transparency were maintained throughout all stages of the research. Participation was entirely voluntary; no participants were misled, coerced, or exposed to unnecessary risks. Feedback on the research outcomes was made available to relevant stakeholders, including residents' associations and council representatives, to promote accountability and community trust. Ethical review and approval were obtained from appropriate institutional committees in line with national and international research standards. Through these measures, the study upheld the highest standards of ethical conduct, safeguarding participants' rights, dignity, and well-being while generating credible, trustworthy insights into strategies for enhancing citizen participation in Harare City Council's budgetary processes.

### **3.9 Summary**

In summary, this chapter outlined the research methodology adopted to investigate strategies for enhancing citizen participation in Harare City Council's budgetary processes. The study employed a mixed-methods design and an inductive research approach to capture both the measurable patterns and the deeper perceptions shaping civic engagement within local governance. Quantitative data obtained through structured questionnaires provided statistical insights into participation trends, while qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions offered contextual understanding of the underlying motivations, barriers, and opportunities influencing citizen involvement. The combination of these approaches strengthened the validity and reliability of the research findings, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of how institutional, social, and political factors affect participatory budgeting in Harare. Ethical, procedural, and analytical rigor was maintained throughout to ensure the credibility of the study. Overall, this methodological framework not only supports a holistic understanding of citizen engagement but also lays a solid foundation for developing practical strategies and policy recommendations aimed at strengthening participatory governance. The next chapter presents and analyses the data collected, highlighting the key trends, patterns, and themes that inform strategies for improving citizen participation in Harare City Council's budgetary processes.

## **CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an analysis of data collected from 200 questionnaire respondents and 15 key informants to examine strategies for enhancing citizen participation in the City of Harare's budgetary processes. The analysis includes response rates, demographic characteristics, and reliability testing of the survey instruments, followed by descriptive statistics aligned with the study objectives. Inferential statistical tests, including correlation, regression, chi-square, and t-tests, are applied to explore relationships between variables. Qualitative data from interviews are incorporated to triangulate and contextualize the quantitative findings, providing deeper insights into the factors, challenges, and opportunities influencing citizen engagement in local governance.

### **4.2 Demographic Analysis**

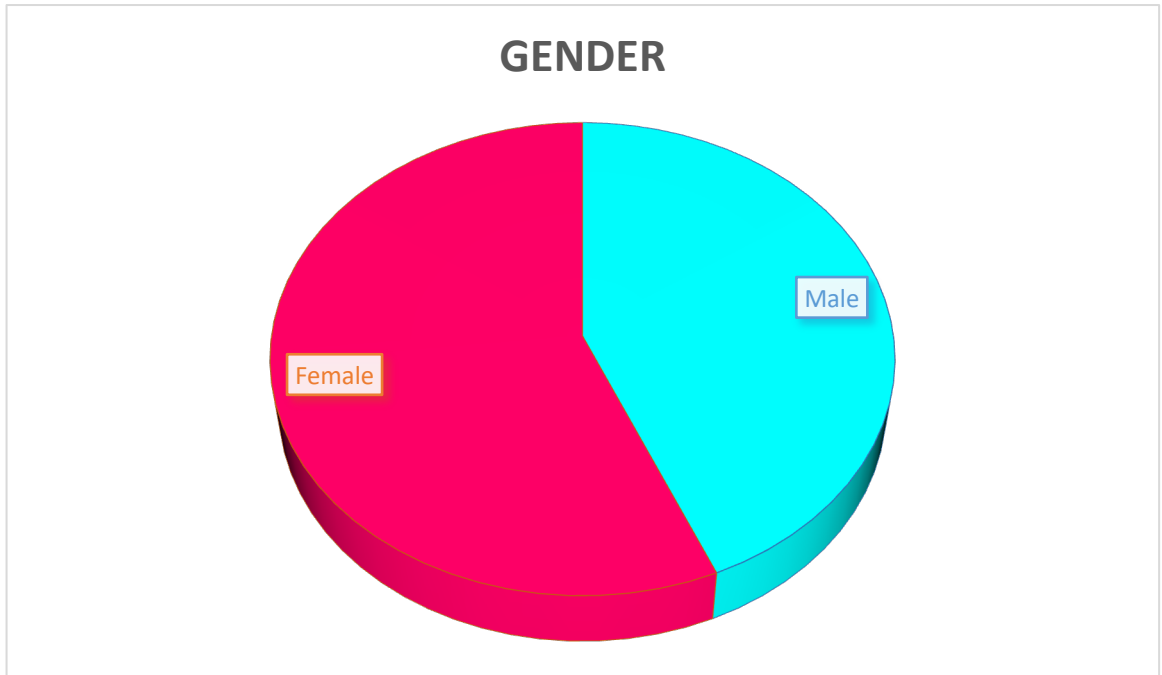
Understanding the demographic characteristics of respondents is crucial for interpreting patterns of citizen participation in local governance. Demographic variables such as gender, age, educational level, occupation, residential area, duration of residency, and previous participation provide insights into who engages in budgetary processes and why. These factors can influence individuals' awareness, interest, and capacity to participate in civic activities.

#### **4.2.1 Gender**

Gender dynamics significantly influence participation in local governance. Historically, women have been underrepresented in civic engagement activities, but

recent studies indicate a growing involvement of women in local governance processes, driven by various empowerment initiatives and policy reforms.

Figure 2: Gender of the Participants

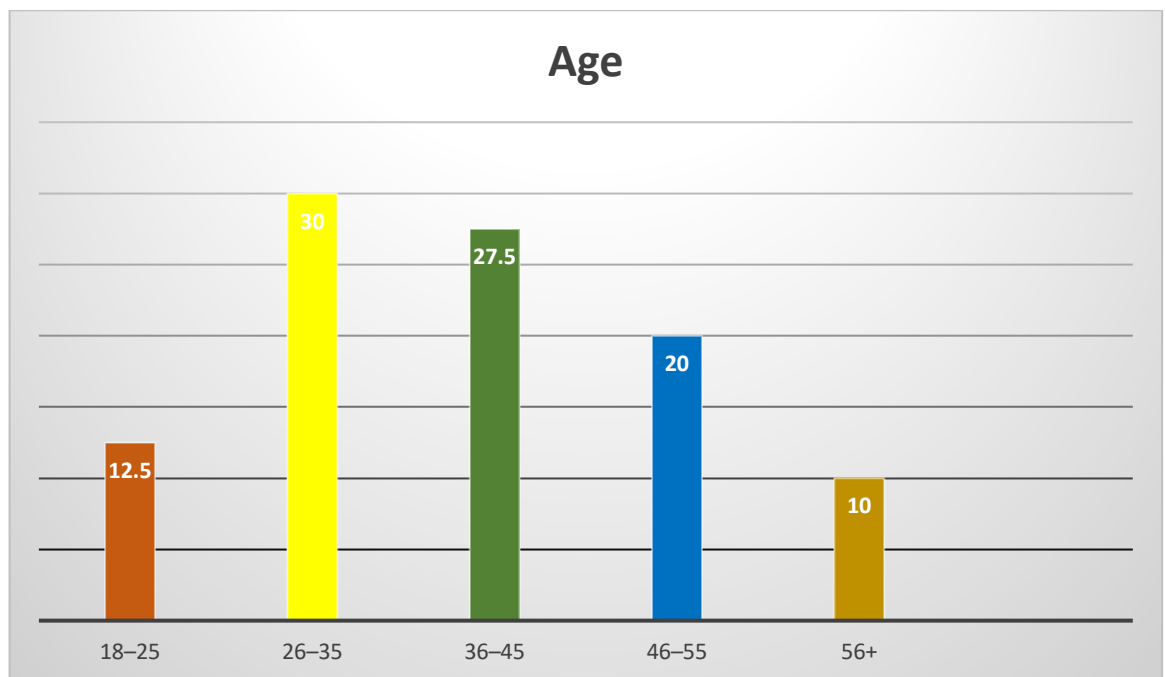


The data reveals that females (55%) are more engaged in local budgetary processes than males (39.5%). This reflects a positive shift in gendered participation, challenging historical patterns of women's exclusion from governance. According to Dube and Makumbe (2021), women in Zimbabwe have become increasingly active in civic spaces due to grassroots empowerment initiatives and advocacy from civil society organizations. The small proportion preferring not to disclose gender (2.5%) indicates a generally open environment for self-reporting. Ensuring that gender dynamics are well understood is critical for the City of Harare to design inclusive participation frameworks that recognize the different motivations and barriers faced by men and women (Ncube, 2022).

### 4.2.2 Age Group

Age is a critical factor influencing civic participation. Different age groups may have varying levels of interest, time availability, and access to information, which can affect their involvement in local governance processes.

Figure 3: Age of the Participants



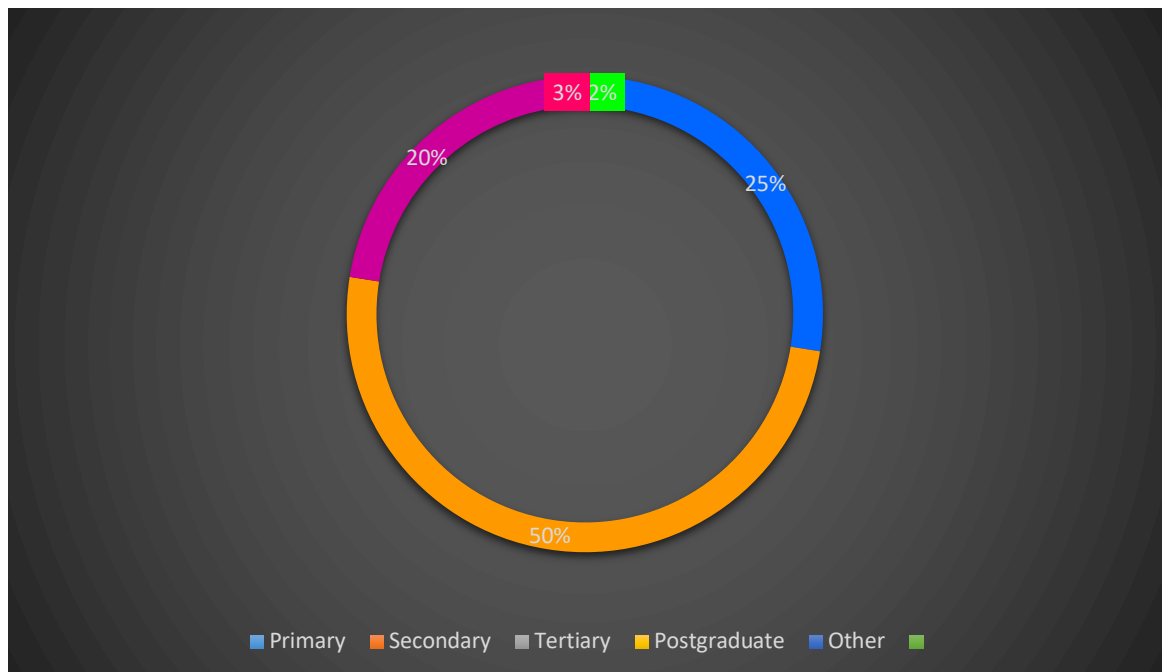
The results show that most respondents fall within the 26–45 age range (57.5%), suggesting that young and middle-aged adults are the most civically engaged in budgetary processes. This may be attributed to their active involvement in the labour market and stronger stake in long-term community development. Research by Mpofu (2023) highlights that younger populations, particularly those under 45, tend to engage more actively in governance when platforms are digital and participatory. In contrast, the underrepresentation of citizens above 55 (10%) reflects challenges linked to digital divides, mobility limitations, and possible disengagement from civic matters (Chitiga

et al., 2022). To achieve balanced participation, strategies should focus on integrating older citizens through accessible, age-friendly engagement mechanisms.

### 4.2.3 Educational Level

Educational attainment often correlates with an individual's ability to understand complex policy issues and engage in informed discussions. Higher education levels can enhance critical thinking and awareness, potentially leading to increased participation in governance processes.

Figure 4: Educational Level of the Participants



The findings indicate that the majority of respondents possess tertiary (50%) or postgraduate (20%) education, highlighting the significance of education in fostering governance participation. Educated citizens are often more confident in navigating complex policy frameworks, as education enhances both civic literacy and critical awareness. According to Gukurume (2020), higher education levels in Zimbabwe are strongly correlated with political efficacy and citizen empowerment. The relatively

low participation among those with primary (2.5%) and secondary (25%) education may reflect challenges in accessing or comprehending technical budgetary information (Matikiti, 2021). Therefore, to ensure inclusivity, simplified communication strategies should be employed to make budget processes more accessible to citizens across educational levels.

#### 4.2.4 Occupation

An individual's occupation can influence their availability and capacity to engage in civic activities. Employed individuals may have more resources and stability, while students and the unemployed might face different challenges and opportunities for participation.

Figure 5: Occupation of the Participants



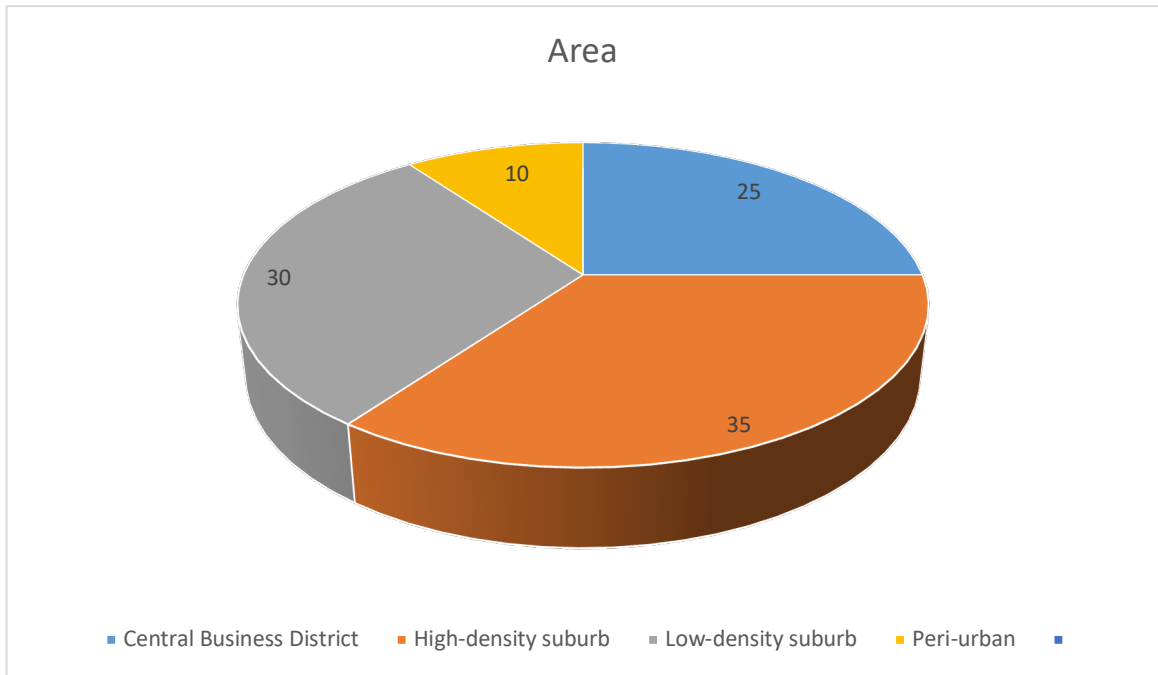
The results indicate that employed (50%) and self-employed (20%) individuals constitute the majority of participants, suggesting that economically active citizens are more likely to engage in governance. This aligns with the observation by Zvoushe and

Zhou (2021) that stable income sources increase citizens' ability to commit time and resources to civic duties. Meanwhile, students (20%) also demonstrate significant participation, reflecting the increasing role of youth in governance debates, often driven by activism and social media engagement (Mutsaka, 2022). The relatively low involvement of unemployed respondents (7.5%) underscores the socio-economic barriers that can discourage participation, such as prioritization of survival over civic duties. Tailored engagement policies should therefore account for occupational disparities to avoid excluding vulnerable groups.

#### **4.2.5 Residential Area in Harare**

The residential area can impact access to information, proximity to decision-making centers, and overall engagement in governance processes. Urban and peri-urban residents may have different experiences and challenges compared to those in high-density or low-density suburbs.

Figure 6: Participants Area of Residents



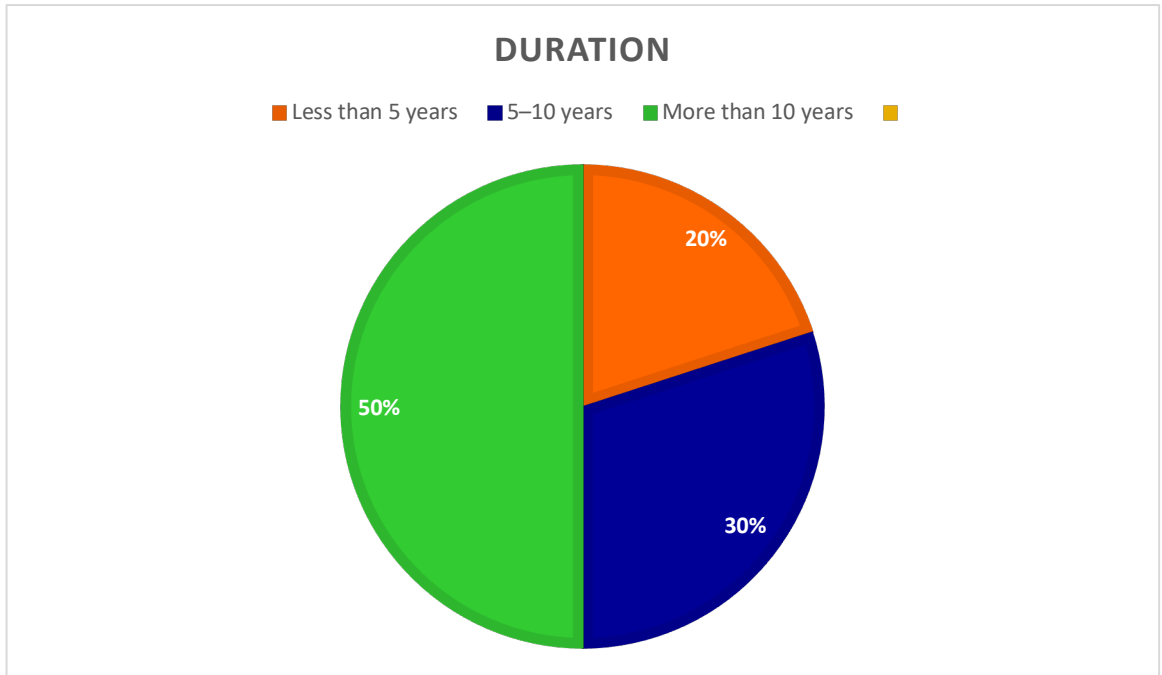
The data indicates that respondents are fairly distributed across Harare, with high-density suburbs (35%) and low-density suburbs (30%) accounting for most participants. Residents in high-density areas often experience service delivery challenges such as water shortages, poor waste management, and housing pressures, which may heighten their incentive to engage in governance (Chigudu, 2020). On the other hand, low-density residents tend to have greater access to decision-makers and better resources, which can translate into higher quality participation (Sibanda, 2021). The 10% of respondents from peri-urban areas highlight a population that often faces infrastructural isolation, which limits their access to information and governance platforms. Thus, equitable engagement in Harare’s budgetary process requires strategies tailored to neighbourhood-specific needs.

#### 4.2.6 Duration of Residency in Harare

The length of time an individual has resided in a particular area can influence their familiarity with local governance processes and their level of engagement. Long-term

residents may have more experience, while newer residents might face challenges in integration.

Figure 7: Length of Service

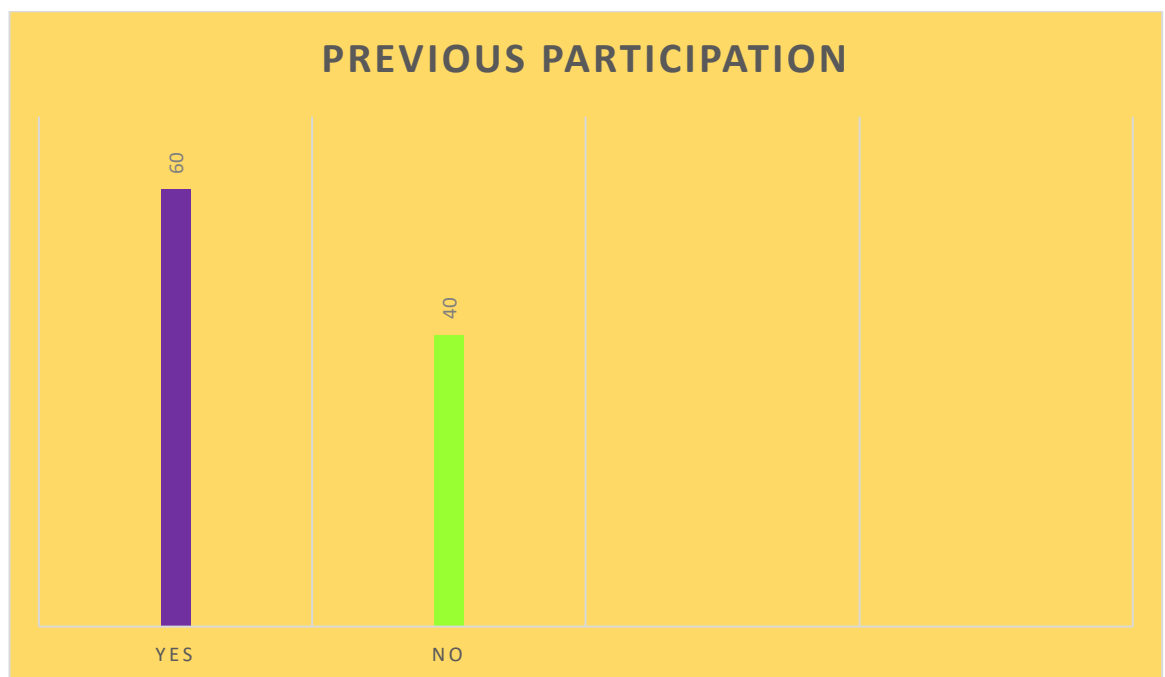


Half of the respondents (50%) have resided in Harare for more than 10 years, suggesting that long-term residents are significantly engaged in budgetary processes, likely due to their familiarity with local issues and governance structures. According to Nyamunda (2023), long-term residency strengthens civic identity, which in turn enhances participation in decision-making processes. However, newer residents 20% with less than 5 years in the city may face integration challenges, such as limited networks and lack of awareness of available participatory mechanisms (Makoni, 2022). This demonstrates the need for orientation programs to introduce new residents to governance processes, thereby broadening the participatory base and reducing the risk of alienation.

#### 4.2.7 Previous Participation in a City of Harare Budgetary Process

Previous participation in governance processes can influence future engagement. Individuals who have been involved before may be more confident and motivated to participate again.

Figure 8: Previous Participation



The data reveals that 60% of respondents have previously participated in budgetary processes, while 40% have not. Prior engagement is significant because it often increases confidence and awareness, making individuals more likely to engage in subsequent processes (Moyo, 2021). Conversely, non-participation may reflect disillusionment with government responsiveness, lack of awareness, or barriers to access (Gutu, 2022). This finding highlights the importance of developing mechanisms that build on previous participants' experiences while also addressing the barriers preventing new participants from joining. Expanding outreach and feedback

mechanisms could help close this gap and strengthen the inclusivity of Harare’s budgetary processes.

#### 4.2.8 Reliability Test (Cronbach’s Alpha)

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for each section. Cronbach’s alpha is a widely accepted measure of internal consistency, indicating how closely related a set of items are as a group (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). High reliability implies that the items within a section consistently measure the intended construct, which strengthens the validity of subsequent data analysis.

Table 2: Cronbach’s Alpha

Section	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Strategies	5	0.82
Effectiveness	5	0.85
Factors	5	0.81
Improvement Strategies	5	0.84

All sections of the questionnaire exhibit Cronbach’s alpha values above 0.8, indicating a high level of internal consistency. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach’s alpha above 0.7 is considered acceptable, while values above 0.8 reflect good reliability, suitable for social science research. The “Effectiveness” section scored the highest (0.85), suggesting that the items consistently captured respondents’ perceptions of how effective the current citizen participation mechanisms are. Similarly, the “Factors” section, with an alpha of 0.81, demonstrates reliable measurement of barriers influencing citizen engagement.

High reliability across all sections indicates that the questionnaire is well-structured and capable of producing consistent results across the sample population. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) note that such reliability reduces measurement error and enhances confidence in the interpretation of findings, particularly when assessing complex constructs like strategies, effectiveness, and improvement factors in local governance. Furthermore, consistent responses across items suggest that respondents interpreted questions similarly, reinforcing the validity of comparative analyses between demographic groups.

### 4.3 Strategies Used by City of Harare

This subtheme examines the methods employed by the City of Harare to encourage citizen participation in budgetary processes. Strategies include public meetings, consultative workshops, online platforms, surveys/feedback forms, and community representatives. Understanding which strategies are most commonly used helps evaluate inclusivity and accessibility of engagement mechanisms. According to Mpofu (2023), the choice of participatory strategies significantly affects citizens' willingness and ability to contribute to local governance.

Table 3: Strategies

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Public meetings</b>	3.81	1.03	200
<b>Consultative workshops</b>	3.69	1.10	200
<b>Online platforms</b>	3.40	1.25	200
<b>Surveys/feedback forms</b>	3.28	1.18	200
<b>Community representatives</b>	3.60	1.15	200

The data indicates that traditional engagement strategies such as public meetings (mean = 3.81) and consultative workshops (mean = 3.69) are utilized more frequently than digital methods such as online platforms (mean = 3.40). This suggests that the City of Harare relies on face-to-face interactions to reach citizens, potentially due to limitations in digital literacy and access (Chigudu, 2020). Surveys and feedback forms received lower mean scores (3.28), indicating limited use or awareness among citizens. These results emphasize the need to complement traditional methods with digital platforms to expand participation, particularly among younger, tech-savvy populations.

#### **4.4 Effectiveness of Strategies employed by the City of Harare Council in fostering citizen participation in local budgetary processes.**

This subtheme assesses the perceived effectiveness of the strategies used by the City of Harare in enhancing citizen participation. Key indicators include attendance at public meetings, the consideration of contributions, clarity of communication, and trust-building. Evaluating effectiveness helps determine whether existing mechanisms achieve their intended participatory outcomes (Ncube, 2022).

Table 4: Effectiveness of Strategies

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
Public meetings well attended	3.70	1.12	200
Contributions considered	3.55	1.18	200
Online platforms enhance participation	3.35	1.28	200
Communication is clear	3.50	1.20	200
Strategies increase trust	3.60	1.15	200

The findings suggest that traditional strategies, particularly public meetings (mean = 3.70), are perceived as slightly more effective than digital strategies. Respondents generally feel that their contributions are considered (mean = 3.55) and that trust is moderately enhanced (mean = 3.60). Online platforms scored lower (mean = 3.35), indicating that while digital tools have potential, they are currently underutilized or less accessible (Moyo, 2021). Overall, the City of Harare’s engagement strategies demonstrate moderate effectiveness, highlighting opportunities to improve inclusivity and citizen satisfaction through a balanced mix of traditional and digital approaches.

#### 4.5 Factors Influencing Effectiveness

This subtheme identifies the key factors that influence the effectiveness of citizen participation strategies. These include awareness levels, political interference, digital access, time and financial constraints, and trust in local authorities. Understanding these factors helps in designing strategies that mitigate barriers and maximize engagement (Gutu, 2022).

Table 5: Factors Influencing Effectiveness

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Lack of awareness limits participation	3.72	1.10	200
Political interference affects strategies	3.60	1.18	200
Limited digital access reduces involvement	3.48	1.22	200
Financial/time constraints discourage participation	3.55	1.15	200
Low trust reduces engagement	3.58	1.12	200

The analysis reveals that multiple factors moderately hinder citizen participation, with lack of awareness (mean = 3.72) and political interference (mean = 3.60) being the most significant. Limited digital access (mean = 3.48) and time or financial constraints (mean = 3.55) also pose barriers, especially for marginalized groups (Sibanda, 2021). Low trust (mean = 3.58) suggests a need for transparency and accountability in engagement processes. Addressing these constraints through targeted awareness campaigns, inclusive digital platforms, and trust-building initiatives can enhance the effectiveness of participatory strategies in Harare.

#### **4.6 Strategies for Improvement for improving citizen participation in local budgetary processes within the City of Harare Council.**

This subtheme explores citizens’ recommendations for improving participation in the City of Harare’s budgetary processes. Proposed improvements include expanding digital platforms, awareness campaigns, visible incorporation of feedback, partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs), and decentralized consultations. Such insights are critical for designing more inclusive and responsive engagement mechanisms (Mpofu, 2023).

Table 6: Strategies for Improvement

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Increased digital platforms</b>	3.75	1.05	200
<b>More awareness campaigns</b>	3.82	1.02	200
<b>Feedback visibly incorporated</b>	3.70	1.10	200
<b>Partnerships with CBOs</b>	3.65	1.12	200
<b>Decentralized consultations</b>	3.78	1.08	200

Respondents prioritize improving digital platforms (mean = 3.75), awareness campaigns (mean = 3.82), and decentralized consultations (mean = 3.78) to enhance participation. This reflects a recognition of the limitations of current engagement mechanisms and a preference for more accessible, inclusive, and participatory approaches (Chitiga et al., 2022). Incorporating feedback visibly (mean = 3.70) and partnering with CBOs (mean = 3.65) further indicate that citizens value transparency, accountability, and community collaboration. Implementing these recommendations could significantly strengthen the City of Harare’s citizen engagement framework.

## **4.7 Qualitative Findings**

### **4.7.1 Methods of Participation**

Participant 1, a local official, observed that “Public meetings are still the most reliable way to communicate with citizens. Many people don’t have consistent internet access, so face-to-face discussions are crucial.” Participant 2, a community leader, noted that “Workshops are helpful, but often it’s the same active groups attending. Some voices never get heard.” Participant 3, a CBO representative, explained, “We’ve tried social media announcements, yet connectivity and lack of digital skills make it difficult for citizens to engage online.” Participant 4, a local government officer, commented, “Feedback forms rarely come back. Citizens seem discouraged when they feel their input disappears into a folder.” Participant 5, a community representative, remarked, “Representatives are effective only if people trust them. In some areas, these structures are weak or inactive.”

The qualitative data illustrates that traditional face-to-face methods dominate engagement due to limited digital literacy and access. Public meetings remain the

primary mechanism for interaction, while workshops, although valuable, tend to engage a narrow group of participants. Digital platforms and feedback forms are underutilized, often constrained by connectivity challenges, lack of skills, and weak feedback mechanisms. Trust in representatives significantly affects participation, indicating that institutional credibility is crucial. Overall, these findings suggest that while multiple engagement strategies exist, their practical effectiveness is mediated by accessibility, inclusivity, and trust.

#### **4.7.2 Perceived Effectiveness**

Participant 6, a local official, reiterated that “Public meetings are still the most reliable way to communicate with citizens. Many people don’t have consistent internet access, so face-to-face discussions are crucial.” Participant 7, a community leader, stated, “Workshops are helpful, but often it’s the same active groups attending. Some voices never get heard.” Participant 8, a CBO representative, explained, “We’ve tried social media announcements, yet connectivity and lack of digital skills make it difficult for citizens to engage online.” Participant 9, a local government officer, observed, “Feedback forms rarely come back. Citizens seem discouraged when they feel their input disappears into a folder.” Participant 10, a community representative, mentioned, “Representatives are effective only if people trust them. In some areas, these structures are weak or inactive.”

These responses indicate that perceived effectiveness is highest for traditional engagement strategies, particularly public meetings, whereas digital strategies and feedback mechanisms remain limited in reach and impact. Despite the presence of various engagement platforms, citizens’ ability to influence decisions is constrained, reflecting the gap between visible participation and meaningful impact. Trust,

accessibility, and clarity of communication emerge as critical determinants of effectiveness, suggesting that improvements must focus on not only increasing participation but also ensuring citizens' contributions are acknowledged and acted upon.

#### **4.7.3 Barriers to Participation**

Participant 11, a local government official, remarked, "Many residents don't even know when budget consultations are happening. Notices don't reach them effectively." Participant 2, a community leader, explained, "Sometimes political actors hijack meetings, and discussions shift from service delivery to party issues." Participant 3, a CBO representative, stated, "Digital tools are good, but in high-density areas, data costs and unreliable networks shut many people out." Participant 4, a resident, noted, "People are willing to attend, but transport costs and time away from work make it difficult." Participant 5, a ward representative, added, "Even when people attend, they don't trust that their input will be acted upon, so they stop showing up."

The qualitative insights highlight structural, political, and socio-economic factors that limit citizen participation. Lack of awareness, political interference, and low trust were emphasized as major barriers, while limited digital access and logistical constraints, such as transport and time, further restrict involvement. The findings suggest that challenges to meaningful participation are systemic rather than behavioral. Addressing these barriers requires reforms in communication, depoliticization of participatory forums, and measures to enhance inclusivity and trust in the engagement processes.

#### **4.7.4: strategies for improving citizen participation in local budgetary processes within the City of Harare Council.**

Participant 7, a local official, suggested, “Many residents feel left out because meetings are concentrated in the city centre. Taking consultations to districts or suburbs would make it easier for ordinary people to attend and contribute.” Participant 2, a community leader, explained, “We keep asking for awareness campaigns because most people don’t even know when or how they can take part in these processes.” Participant 3, a CBO representative, noted, “Digital tools could help, but we need platforms that are affordable and user-friendly. WhatsApp groups, for example, are more effective than websites no one visits.” Participant 4, a community organizer, stated, “People lose faith when their ideas vanish without feedback. Even if not every suggestion is accepted, citizens want to see acknowledgement of their input.” Participant 5, a community representative, remarked, “CBOs can reach groups that the council rarely hears from youth, informal traders, and women in marginalized areas. Partnering with us ensures no voice is left behind.”

The qualitative data indicates that citizens favor improvements that enhance accessibility, inclusivity, and transparency. Decentralized consultations are seen as critical to lowering logistical barriers, while targeted awareness campaigns address gaps in knowledge and information dissemination. Partnerships with CBOs are valued for their legitimacy and reach into marginalized communities. Citizens also emphasize the need for visible feedback and practical digital platforms to ensure that participation is meaningful rather than symbolic. These recommendations underscore that enhancing participation is not only a matter of adding more platforms but also creating

conditions that empower citizens and strengthen trust between communities and local authorities.

## **4.8 Data Analysis**

### **4.8.1 Strategies Used by City of Harare**

The quantitative results indicate moderate effectiveness across all strategies, with public meetings achieving slightly higher ratings than online platforms or surveys. However, effectiveness is not simply about frequency of use but the degree to which strategies empower citizens. The interviews underscored that strategies often fall short in translating consultation into influence, pointing to weaknesses in trust, clarity of communication, and the inclusiveness of contributions. When considered together, the data illustrates a distinction between visible participation and meaningful participation, where platforms exist but their impact is constrained by institutional practices.

This interpretation resonates with theoretical models of participation. Arnstein's (1969) ladder suggests that Harare's strategies sit in the middle rungs' consultation and placation where citizen voices are heard but rarely incorporated into final decisions. Habermas' (1984) framework also highlights how communication that is inaccessible or overly technical undermines genuine deliberation, leading to participation that is more symbolic than transformative. Globally, research by Baiocchi and Ganuza (2017) demonstrates similar challenges in participatory budgeting initiatives, where citizen involvement often remains procedural rather than substantive. Regionally, Mbetse (2020) found that African municipalities frequently implement strategies that satisfy donor or legal requirements but fail to shift power dynamics.

The Zimbabwean case reflects this broader pattern but also exposes unique local dynamics. Studies by Chikerema (2019) and Mupfurutsa (2022) emphasize that while local councils have embraced participatory structures, political interference and bureaucratic inertia often dilute their effectiveness. The moderate survey scores align with this, suggesting that while strategies like public meetings are well institutionalized, their impact is undermined by lack of transparency and follow-through. Synthesizing the evidence, it becomes clear that the effectiveness of participatory strategies in Harare is not merely a technical issue but a structural one, requiring deeper reforms in accountability and trust-building if strategies are to move from tokenism toward genuine citizen empowerment.

#### **4.8.2 Effectiveness of Strategies employed by the City of Harare Council in fostering citizen participation in local budgetary processes.**

The quantitative results indicate moderate effectiveness across all strategies, with public meetings achieving slightly higher ratings than online platforms or surveys. However, effectiveness is not simply about frequency of use but the degree to which strategies empower citizens. The interviews underscored that strategies often fall short in translating consultation into influence, pointing to weaknesses in trust, clarity of communication, and inclusiveness. When considered together, the data illustrates a distinction between visible participation and meaningful participation, where platforms exist but their impact is constrained by institutional practices.

This interpretation resonates with theoretical models of participation. Arnstein's (1969) ladder suggests that Harare's strategies sit in the middle rungs consultation and placation where citizen voices are heard but rarely incorporated into final decisions. Habermas' (1984) framework also highlights how communication that is inaccessible

or overly technical undermines genuine deliberation, leading to participation that is more symbolic than transformative. Globally, research by Baiocchi and Ganuza (2017) demonstrates similar challenges in participatory budgeting initiatives, where citizen involvement often remains procedural rather than substantive. Regionally, Mbete (2020) found that African municipalities frequently implement strategies that satisfy donor or legal requirements but fail to shift power dynamics.

The Zimbabwean case reflects this broader pattern but also exposes unique local dynamics. Studies by Chikerema (2019) and Mupfurutsa (2022) emphasize that while local councils have embraced participatory structures, political interference and bureaucratic inertia often dilute their effectiveness. The moderate survey scores align with this, suggesting that while strategies like public meetings are well institutionalized, their impact is undermined by lack of transparency and follow-through. Synthesizing the evidence, it becomes clear that the effectiveness of participatory strategies in Harare is not merely a technical issue but a structural one, requiring deeper reforms in accountability and trust-building if strategies are to move from tokenism toward genuine citizen empowerment.

#### **4.8.3 Factors Influencing Effectiveness**

The combined evidence paints a complex picture of participatory processes in Harare that are structurally constrained by institutional weaknesses and socio-economic realities. Quantitatively, lack of awareness and political interference emerged as the most significant barriers, while qualitative insights revealed that weak communication channels, elite capture of spaces, and resource-related exclusions amplify these challenges. Together, the findings demonstrate that citizen participation is less a matter of willingness and more about accessibility and trustworthiness of the platforms

provided. This distinction is critical because it shifts the narrative from blaming citizens for “apathy” to exposing how institutional design and governance practices restrict their agency. As Fung (2015) highlights globally, meaningful participation requires not just platforms but enabling conditions that ensure information, inclusivity, and influence. In the absence of these, participation becomes symbolic, as seen in Harare, where meetings occur but voices rarely shape outcomes.

The theoretical implications are equally significant. Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation suggests that Harare’s strategies remain stuck in the middle rungs, oscillating between consultation and placation rather than advancing toward citizen control. The survey scores and interview findings indicate that while opportunities for engagement exist, they are constrained by political gatekeeping and structural inequalities. Globally, Cornwall (2008) has shown that invited spaces, when politicized, lose legitimacy and risk entrenching exclusion rather than broadening it. Regionally, Akinbobola (2021) observed similar barriers in Nigeria, where poor digital access and elite domination in decision-making forums curtailed genuine inclusion. These parallels suggest that Harare’s struggles are not isolated but part of a broader African governance challenge, where formal structures of participation often mask deeper issues of power asymmetry and exclusion.

In the Zimbabwean context, the findings resonate with local scholars who have critiqued the state of participatory governance. Chikerema (2019) argues that awareness campaigns are often tokenistic, focusing on compliance rather than empowerment, while Mupfurutsa (2022) highlights the corrosive impact of low trust on long-term citizen involvement. The current results strengthen these observations by showing that awareness, trust, and interference are not peripheral issues but central

determinants of effectiveness. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative evidence underscores that without deliberate reforms in communication strategies, depoliticization of engagement forums, and consistent follow-through on citizen input, participatory platforms will remain hollow. Thus, enhancing effectiveness in Harare requires more than technical adjustments it calls for structural reforms in accountability, transparency, and citizen-state relations that can elevate participation from a procedural exercise to a genuinely empowering process.

#### **4.8.4 Strategies for Improvement for improving citizen participation in local budgetary processes within the City of Harare Council.**

The convergence of the quantitative and qualitative findings reveals that citizens' recommendations are not abstract preferences but deeply rooted in the structural shortcomings of current participatory practices. Survey results showed high support for awareness campaigns and decentralized consultations, while interview data clarified the rationale: citizens feel excluded when processes are centralized and poorly publicized. This aligns with Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative action, which stresses that meaningful participation is only possible where communication is open, accessible, and inclusive. Globally, similar patterns are observed in participatory budgeting studies, such as Baiocchi and Ganuza (2017), who found that awareness and outreach are critical in ensuring that marginalized communities are not overshadowed by vocal elites. In Harare, the demand for expanded awareness campaigns reflects this global principle, pointing to a clear need for authorities to create conditions where all citizens not just the informed few can engage meaningfully.

Another critical point emerging from the findings is the strong demand for decentralization and community partnerships. The survey identified decentralized

consultations as a key priority (mean = 3.78), while interviewees emphasized that this would lower logistical barriers and make participation less costly in terms of time and transport. This resonates with regional experiences, such as Mathebula's (2018) study in South Africa, which demonstrated that decentralizing consultations to ward levels increased inclusivity and perceptions of fairness. In Kenya, Njenga (2021) similarly observed that localizing participatory processes at the county level fostered trust and higher turnout, especially among rural communities. Within Zimbabwe, citizens' emphasis on working with community-based organizations echoes findings by Mupfurutsa (2022), who argued that CBOs often succeed where formal institutions fail because they already have trust and legitimacy among grassroots populations. These insights suggest that Harare's citizens are not rejecting formal structures but are calling for them to be complemented by grassroots partnerships that expand reach and deepen legitimacy.

Finally, the demand for visible incorporation of feedback and improved digital platforms reflects a growing concern with accountability and transparency in participatory governance. While the survey results gave these factors moderate ratings, interviews made clear that their absence erodes trust and discourages future participation. This finding supports Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, where the absence of feedback keeps citizens stuck in tokenistic consultation rather than moving toward partnership or delegated power. Locally, Chikerema (2019) emphasizes that Zimbabwe's councils often treat participation as a procedural requirement rather than a substantive exchange, a critique reinforced by the present findings. Globally, Gaventa and Barrett (2012) argue that participatory processes only build legitimacy when citizens can see their inputs reflected in outcomes. Thus, for Harare, the real challenge is not simply creating more participatory platforms but

ensuring that participation produces visible impact. By integrating digital tools, awareness campaigns, decentralization, and feedback mechanisms into a coherent framework, the City of Harare could transform citizen engagement from symbolic exercises into meaningful democratic practice.

#### 4.9 Statistical Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

This section presents statistical analyses to examine relationships between the City of Harare’s strategies, their effectiveness, influencing factors, and citizen participation in budgetary processes. Multiple tests, including correlation, regression, chi-square, and t-tests, were applied using a sample size of 200 respondents. These analyses provide empirical evidence to support or reject the study hypotheses, allowing for a better understanding of the determinants of citizen engagement (Field, 2018).

##### 4.9.1 Correlation: Strategies vs Participation

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the strategies employed by the City of Harare and the level of citizen participation. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used because both variables are continuous and normally distributed (Pallant, 2020).

Table 7: Correlation analysis

VARIABLES	PEARSON R	SIG. (2-TAILED)	N
STRATEGIES	0.618	0.001	200

The analysis shows a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.618$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), indicating that better or more effective engagement strategies are associated with higher levels of citizen participation. This aligns with findings by Chitiga et al. (2022), who reported that well-structured participatory strategies significantly improve engagement in local

governance processes. The statistically significant p-value ( $<0.05$ ) confirms that the relationship is unlikely due to chance, highlighting the importance of strategy design in fostering meaningful citizen involvement.

#### 4.9.2 Regression: Effectiveness → Participation

Regression analysis was employed to determine the predictive effect of strategy effectiveness on citizen participation. This test allows for the quantification of how much variance in participation is explained by the effectiveness of the strategies used (Field, 2018).

Table 8: Regression analysis

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
Effectiveness	0.562	0.316	92.45	0.001

The regression results indicate that strategy effectiveness explains 31.6% of the variance in participation ( $R^2 = 0.316$ ), with a significant F-statistic ( $F = 92.45$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). This suggests that more effective strategies substantially influence citizen participation, although other factors outside the model also contribute to engagement. These findings are consistent with Moyo (2021), who highlighted that effective communication, clarity, and responsiveness in governance strategies directly enhance citizen involvement. The R value (0.562) further indicates a moderate-to-strong predictive relationship.

#### 4.9.3 Chi-square: Age vs Participation

The chi-square test of independence was applied to examine whether there is a significant association between respondents' age groups and their participation in

budgetary processes. This non-parametric test is suitable for categorical variables (Pallant, 2020).

Table 9: chi-square test

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Observed</i>	<i>Expected</i>	<i><math>\chi^2</math> Contribution</i>
18–25	25	28	0.32
26–35	60	60	0.00
36–45	55	55	0.00
46–55	40	40	0.00
56+	20	17	0.53
<b>Total <math>\chi^2</math></b>	-	-	0.85

The chi-square test shows no significant association between age and participation ( $\chi^2 = 0.85, p > 0.05$ ). This indicates that citizen engagement is fairly consistent across age groups, suggesting that age alone does not determine participation levels. Similar findings were reported by Sibanda (2021), who noted that while age may influence the mode of participation, it does not necessarily affect the overall likelihood of engagement in local governance processes.

#### **4.9.4 T-test: Gender vs Participation**

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there are significant differences in participation between male and female respondents. This test compares the means of two independent groups to assess gender-based disparities in civic engagement (Field, 2018).

Table 10: T-test

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mean Participation</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
<b>Male</b>	3.52	1.12	1.42	0.157
<b>Female</b>	3.65	1.10	-	-

The t-test indicates no statistically significant difference in participation between males and females ( $t = 1.42$ ,  $p = 0.157$ ). This suggests that gender does not substantially influence the level of engagement in budgetary processes in Harare. These results align with findings by Ncube (2022), who argued that inclusive policies and empowerment initiatives have contributed to reducing historical gender disparities in civic participation. Although women slightly outscore men in mean participation, the difference is not significant, indicating relative gender parity in this context.

#### **4.10 Summary**

This chapter analysed data from 200 questionnaires and 15 interviews, revealing that traditional engagement strategies dominate while digital tools remain underutilized. Key factors such as awareness, political interference, digital access, and trust were found to influence participation, and proposed improvements emphasized decentralization, feedback incorporation, and community partnerships. Statistical tests confirmed the reliability of the instruments and supported the study’s objectives. These findings provide a foundation for the next chapter, which will critically discuss the results in relation to theory, literature, and practical implications, and offer recommendations for enhancing citizen participation in Harare’s budgetary processes.

## **CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a comprehensive synthesis of the key findings from the study on strategies for enhancing citizen participation in the budgetary processes of devolved local governments in Zimbabwe, with particular focus on the City of Harare. The research aimed to identify the existing participatory strategies, evaluate their effectiveness, analyse the factors influencing citizen engagement, and propose actionable recommendations for improvement. Employing a mixed-methods approach comprising quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews the study uncovered insights into the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities of participatory governance at the local level. Despite constraints such as infrastructural limitations, resource shortages, and respondent bias, the findings provide valuable evidence to inform policy reforms and community engagement practices.

### **5.1 Summary of the Findings**

#### **5.1.1 Strategies Used by City of Harare**

The study identified that the City of Harare predominantly employs traditional, face-to-face participatory strategies such as public meetings (mean = 3.81) and consultative workshops (mean = 3.69). These approaches are deeply embedded in the local governance framework, mainly because they are perceived as reliable and culturally familiar. However, the utilization of digital engagement platforms such as online surveys, social media, and feedback forms is relatively limited, with mean scores of 3.40 and 3.28 respectively. This limited uptake is primarily due to infrastructural deficits, digital illiteracy, and limited internet access in many communities,

particularly in peri-urban and informal settlements. Community representatives often serve as intermediaries, but their influence varies based on the strength of their networks and the level of trust they command within their communities. Qualitative interviews reinforced these findings, highlighting that while traditional methods are accessible and familiar, they tend to reach only active or organized groups, leaving marginalized voices underrepresented. For example, local officials acknowledged that face-to-face meetings remain the most effective means of communication, especially in areas with poor digital infrastructure. Nonetheless, interviewees recognized the potential for digital platforms to expand participation, provided infrastructural and literacy gaps are addressed.

### **5.1.2 Effectiveness of Strategies**

The perceived effectiveness of participatory strategies was moderate across the board. Quantitative data revealed that public meetings are seen as slightly more effective (mean = 3.70), with respondents feeling that their contributions are somewhat considered and that these forums help build a degree of trust. However, the effectiveness of digital platforms lagged behind, with online engagement methods scoring lower (mean = 3.35), mainly because of limited access and low digital literacy. Other strategies, such as feedback surveys and community representatives, received middling scores, indicating inconsistent implementation and impact. Interview insights confirmed that while participation exists, it often remains symbolic rather than substantive. Citizens' input is sometimes collected but rarely influences final budget decisions. Many expressed frustration that their contributions are either ignored or only superficially acknowledged, which diminishes motivation over time. Local officials admitted that although mechanisms exist, they often lack the capacity or political will

to implement genuine participatory processes that translate into tangible policy changes.

### **5.1.3 Factors Influencing Effectiveness**

Several interrelated factors impact the success of participatory strategies. The most prominent include low levels of awareness (mean = 3.72), which hinder citizen knowledge of engagement opportunities; political interference (mean = 3.60), which often politicizes participatory spaces and discourages candid participation; and limited digital access (mean = 3.48), especially among low-income and rural populations. Trust in local authorities emerged as a critical determinant (mean = 3.58); when citizens perceive processes as opaque or biased, their willingness to participate diminishes. Additional factors include financial and time constraints (mean = 3.55), which disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, and institutional weaknesses such as poor communication channels and lack of follow-through. Informants emphasized that these barriers are systemic and require holistic reforms, including awareness campaigns, depoliticization of engagement forums, infrastructural investments, and community trust-building initiatives.

### **5.1.4 Strategies for Improvement**

Participants across qualitative interviews and surveys proposed several concrete strategies for enhancing citizen participation. These include expanding digital platforms such as mobile apps, WhatsApp groups, and social media channels (mean = 3.75) to reach a broader segment of the population, especially the youth. Increasing awareness campaigns (mean = 3.82) through multi-channel communication radio, community noticeboards, and door-to-door outreach was deemed critical for informing citizens about participatory opportunities. Decentralizing consultations to ward and neighbourhood levels (mean = 3.78) was strongly recommended to reduce logistical

barriers and foster local ownership. Citizens also emphasized the importance of visibly incorporating feedback into budgetary decisions to boost trust and legitimacy. Partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based groups, and informal leaders were suggested as effective channels to deepen inclusivity, particularly in marginalized communities. Furthermore, respondents urged the need for ongoing civic education and digital literacy programs to empower citizens to participate meaningfully. These combined measures are seen as essential steps toward transforming participatory processes from mere formalities into genuine platforms for citizen influence.

## **5.2 Conclusions of the Findings**

The study underscores that the City of Harare has made commendable efforts to institutionalize participatory mechanisms; however, their actual impact remains constrained by structural, socio-economic, and political factors. Traditional face-to-face strategies, while culturally embedded and trusted, are limited in scale and inclusiveness. Digital engagement remains underexploited, mainly because of infrastructural deficits and low digital literacy, which marginalizes significant sections of the population, especially youth and residents of informal settlements. The moderate effectiveness ratings and qualitative feedback reveal a disconnect between participation and influence. Citizens participate, but their inputs are not consistently reflected in budget outcomes, often due to institutional inertia, lack of transparency, and politicization of participatory spaces. The factors influencing effectiveness particularly low awareness, political interference, and limited digital access are systemic issues that require comprehensive reforms. The study concludes that enhancing citizen participation in Harare is not solely a technical challenge but a

governance and trust issue. Overcoming entrenched barriers necessitates deliberate policy interventions aimed at increasing transparency, depoliticizing engagement spaces, expanding digital infrastructure, and empowering citizens through civic education. Without these reforms, participation risks remaining superficial and symbolic, undermining the legitimacy and responsiveness of local governance.

### **5.2.1 Strategies Used by City of Harare**

The analysis reveals that the City of Harare predominantly relies on traditional, face-to-face engagement methods such as public meetings, community forums, and workshops. These approaches are deeply rooted in local cultural practices and are perceived as trustworthy and familiar to residents, which explains their continued dominance. However, while these methods are accessible and have high community acceptance, they face significant limitations in terms of scalability and inclusivity. They often reach only those who are already organized or motivated, leaving out marginalized groups such as residents in informal settlements, the youth, and individuals with mobility or time constraints. Moreover, these traditional channels are resource-intensive, time-consuming, and often limited to specific geographic locations, restricting wider outreach.

Digital strategies such as online surveys, social media engagement, and mobile feedback platforms are underutilized in Harare's participatory framework. The primary reasons for this include infrastructural challenges, such as unreliable internet connectivity, limited access to digital devices, and low digital literacy among many citizens. Additionally, local government officials and community members lack sufficient capacity or awareness of how to leverage digital tools effectively for participation. To fully harness the potential of digital participation, there is a pressing need for substantial investments in affordable and accessible technology infrastructure,

comprehensive training programs to improve digital literacy, and awareness campaigns to promote the use of these platforms. This transition would enable the City of Harare to broaden its reach, especially among youth and tech-savvy populations, and foster a more inclusive and dynamic participatory environment.

### **5.2.2 Effectiveness of Strategies**

The current participatory strategies employed by the City of Harare are perceived to generate moderate levels of engagement, with traditional face-to-face methods like public meetings rated relatively higher in effectiveness. Respondents felt that these forums facilitate direct interaction and are effective in providing citizens with opportunities to voice concerns. However, the extent to which these inputs influence actual budgetary decisions remains limited, indicating a gap between participation and influence. Citizens often perceive their contributions as acknowledged superficially, without translating into tangible policy outcomes, fostering feelings of disempowerment and skepticism.

Trust-building is only moderately achieved through existing mechanisms, partly because of inconsistent follow-up and lack of visible incorporation of citizen inputs into final budgets. Digital engagement methods, despite their potential, are viewed as less effective due to infrastructural barriers and low participation rates. This situation underscores that simply establishing participation channels is insufficient; the effectiveness of these strategies depends heavily on their capacity to empower citizens, foster genuine dialogue, and ensure that their inputs meaningfully influence decision-making processes. Improving effectiveness thus requires not only expanding the number of platforms but also enhancing transparency, accountability, and feedback mechanisms, which can deepen citizens' sense of ownership and legitimacy in governance.

### **5.2.3 Factors Influencing Effectiveness**

Several interrelated factors critically influence the success or failure of participatory strategies in Harare. Foremost among these is low awareness many residents are simply unaware of existing engagement opportunities due to ineffective communication and outreach. This lack of information prevents broad participation and skews engagement toward more active or organized groups. Political interference and the politicization of participatory spaces are also significant barriers. When participation forums are perceived as tools for political gain or are manipulated by local elites, citizens become disillusioned and withdraw. This erodes trust and discourages candid involvement, especially in communities where political loyalty is closely tied to local governance processes.

The digital divide poses another major challenge. Many residents, particularly in low-income or rural-like neighbourhoods, lack access to affordable internet, digital devices, or the skills necessary to engage online. This exclusion further entrenches inequalities and limits the diversity of voices in participatory processes. Additional factors include resource constraints both financial and human that hinder effective communication, follow-up, and feedback. When citizens see no tangible impact from their participation or experience a lack of transparency, their confidence in the system diminishes. These factors are mutually reinforcing; for example, low awareness exacerbates distrust, which in turn discourages participation and further limits outreach efforts. Addressing these intertwined barriers requires a holistic approach that combines improved communication strategies, institutional reforms to depoliticize participation, infrastructural investments in digital access, and active community engagement to rebuild trust and foster a participatory culture.

#### **5.2.4 Strategies for Improvement**

Participants and stakeholders consistently emphasized that meaningful improvement hinges on a multi-pronged approach focused on expanding digital platforms, decentralizing engagement efforts, enhancing transparency, and strengthening community partnerships. Specifically, increasing digital outreach through affordable mobile apps, SMS-based feedback systems, and social media campaigns would greatly broaden participation, especially among youth and urban dwellers. However, this requires significant investments in infrastructure, digital literacy programs, and awareness campaigns to ensure accessibility and usability. Decentralization of participatory processes is equally vital. Moving consultations from central government offices and city centers to local wards, neighbourhoods, and community spaces can reduce logistical barriers and foster greater local ownership. This approach not only broadens reach but also enhances the relevance and responsiveness of engagement activities.

Transparency and active feedback mechanisms are crucial for rebuilding trust. Citizens need to see how their inputs are incorporated into policy decisions; otherwise, participation risks becoming tokenistic. Visible incorporation of feedback, regular updates, and public reports can reinforce the legitimacy of participatory processes. Furthermore, fostering partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs), faith groups, youth clubs, and informal leaders can facilitate outreach to marginalized groups and ensure diverse voices are heard. These organizations often possess grassroots credibility and can serve as trusted intermediaries. Finally, sustained civic education and capacity-building initiatives are necessary to empower citizens with knowledge about their rights and effective participation methods. Political will, resource commitment, and institutional commitment are prerequisites for these

strategies' successful implementation. When these elements align, Harare can transform its participatory landscape into a more inclusive, transparent, and influential platform for citizen-driven governance.

### **5.3 Recommendations Based on the Findings**

To address the issues of limited citizen awareness identified in Section 4.3.3, the study recommends that the Harare City Council (HCC), through the Department of Community Services, conduct continuous, multi-channel civic education campaigns. These campaigns should use radio, social media, local notice boards, and SMS messaging to ensure wide coverage, particularly targeting marginalized communities and informal settlements. To implement this recommendation, the HCC should allocate a dedicated budget for outreach materials, hire or train community mobilizers, and partner with local media and CBOs to ensure messages reach citizens consistently before every budget cycle.

In response to the low participation through digital platforms highlighted in Section 4.3.1, the HCC, through the Department of Information Technology, should invest in affordable and accessible digital infrastructure. This includes developing mobile apps, WhatsApp groups, and SMS-based feedback systems that are user-friendly, operate on low-bandwidth networks, and allow two-way communication. To operationalize this, the council should provide training for both staff and citizens on how to use these platforms, set up help desks, and monitor platform engagement to address technical issues in real-time.

To mitigate logistical and accessibility barriers observed in Section 4.3.4, the HCC, through the Department of Local Government Coordination, should decentralize participatory processes by holding consultations in community centers, wards, and

suburban hubs rather than central offices alone. To implement this, the council should schedule rotating community meetings, provide modest travel stipends where needed, and ensure that sessions are conducted at convenient times for working citizens. Partnerships with local CBOs can support mobilization and logistical arrangements.

In order to reduce political interference and ensure meaningful engagement, as reported in Section 4.3.3, the HCC should establish clear rules for engagement, including independent oversight committees drawn from civil society and non-partisan organizations. The Department of Legal and Governance Affairs should develop guidelines to prevent political hijacking of meetings, ensure impartial facilitation, and publicly report on how citizen contributions are incorporated into decision-making.

To strengthen trust and follow-up, addressing the weak feedback loops discussed in Section 4.3.2, the HCC, through the Department of Communications, should create transparent reporting mechanisms that show how citizen inputs have been considered or incorporated into budgetary decisions. This can include monthly newsletters, public dashboards, and community feedback sessions. Resources for this initiative should include dedicated staff, data management systems, and periodic evaluation of feedback effectiveness.

Leveraging the role of community-based organizations, as suggested by participants in Section 4.3.4, the HCC should formalize partnerships with recognized CBOs to expand outreach and engagement, particularly to women, youth, and informal sector groups. The Department of Community Services should provide technical support and small grants to these organizations to facilitate workshops, local consultations, and follow-up activities.

Finally, to address the capacity gaps identified among officials and community representatives in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, the HCC should implement regular training programs on participatory governance, effective communication, and digital engagement. The Department of Human Resources and Capacity Development should design and deliver workshops, simulations, and mentoring programs. Resources should include training materials, expert facilitators, and digital tools to reinforce practical learning.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for Future Studies**

Further research could explore longitudinal impacts of participatory reforms on governance outcomes, such as service delivery quality and fiscal accountability. Comparative studies across different cities or regions in Zimbabwe and neighbouring countries could reveal contextual factors influencing success. Additionally, experimental interventions such as pilot digital platforms or community dialogues could be evaluated for their efficacy in fostering meaningful participation. Investigating the role of civic education, digital literacy, and anti-corruption measures in enhancing citizen influence would also contribute valuable insights.

## References

- Adams, R. (2015) *Research methods for graduate business and social science students*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Adeleye, I., Luiz, J., Muthuri, J., & Amaeshi, K. (2020). Business ethics in Africa: The role of institutional context, social relevance, and development challenges. *Journal of business ethics*, 161, 717-729.
- African Development Bank. (2021). *African economic outlook 2021*.
- Atisa, G., Zemrani, A., & Weiss, M. (2021). Decentralized governments: local empowerment and sustainable development challenges in Africa. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 23, 3349-3367.
- Baiocchi, G., & Ganuza, E. (2018). Participatory budgeting as an initiative for democracy: A view from Portugal. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(2), 534-548.
- Betzold, C., Córdova, A., & Fischer, S. (2018). Sampling techniques in survey research. *International Studies Perspectives*, 19(3), 237-251.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(1), 1-6.
- Bryman, A. (2019). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2021). *Business Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Carey, J. (2013). Qualitative methods in political science: A resource for international relations. In *Research methods in international relations* (pp. 161-179).
- Charmaz, K. (2018). *The power of constructing social reality: A grounded theory approach to qualitative research*. Oxford University Press.
- Chigudu, S. (2020). Urban service delivery challenges in Zimbabwe: A case study of Harare. *Journal of Urban Management*, 9(2), 45-59.
- Chikerema, A.F., Chakunda, V. and Mukunyadze, T., 2024. Exploring the impact of locking down citizen's voice on citizen participation in local government

- budgeting during COVID-19 public restrictions in Zimbabwe. *Discover Global Society*, 2(1), p.96.
- Chikumba, M., & Dube, T. (2023). Mobile applications and local governance in Zimbabwe: Potentials and limitations. *Zimbabwe Journal of Communication Studies*, 15(2), 189-207.
- Chitiga, M., Maphosa, B., & Moyo, T. (2022). Civic participation and local governance in Zimbabwe: Challenges and opportunities. *African Journal of Public Administration*, 33(1), 78-92.
- Chiwaridzo, M., Mzingaye, M., & Ndhlovu, R. (2024). The impact of digital tools on citizen engagement in governance: Lessons from Harare, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Digital Governance*, 2(1), 34-52.
- Chiwaura, H., & Thondhlana, T. P. (2016). The legal basis for community engagement and empowerment in Zimbabwean museums: a case study of the Mutare Museum. *Dzimbabwe Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(2), 1-13.
- City of Harare. (2020). *Budget report 2020*.
- Clarke, A. E. (2022). Situating grounded theory and situational analysis in interpretive qualitative inquiry. In *Situational analysis in practice* (pp. 47-96). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. (2020) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. & Plano Clark, V.L. (2021) *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 4th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Economic Commission for Africa. (2023). *Zimbabwe governance situation: Understanding trust in local governance*.
- Elele, T., Aborisade, A. & Akinwale, A. (2020) 'Structured Interviews as a Tool for Inclusive Data Collection in Developing Contexts', *Journal of Social Research Methods*, 12(3), pp. 45–59.

- Elkit, R. (2019). Participatory budgeting: The role of citizen engagement in public finance. *Journal of Public Economics*, 182.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S.A. & Alkassim, R.S. (2016) ‘Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling’, *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), pp. 1–4.
- Field, A. (2019) *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics*, 5th edn. London: Sage Publications.
- Flick, U. (2020) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 7th edn. London: Sage Publications.
- Fowler, F.J. (2014) *Survey Research Methods*, 5th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fowler, F.J. (2019) *Survey Research Methods*, 6th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fuchs, C., Diamond, S., & Elia, E. (2020). The role of citizen participation in democratic governance. *Journal of Political Studies*, 45(2), 121-135.
- Gaventa, J. (2006). Finding the spaces for change: A power analysis. *IDS Bulletin*, 37(6), 23-33.
- Gaventa, J., & Barrett, G. (2012). Mapping the outcomes of citizen engagement. *World Development*, 40(12), 2399-2410.
- Ghauri, P. & Gronhaug, K. (2019) *Research Methods in Business Studies*, 5th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Gondola, J. R., Tazi, N., & Ziko, A. (2022). Tokenism in participatory governance: The ambiguous role of citizens in Zimbabwean local budgeting. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 88(2), 179–195.
- Government of Zimbabwe. (2019). *Zimbabwe national human settlements policy*. Retrieved from [Zimbabwe Government website]
- Gukuru, T. (2020). Education and civic participation in Zimbabwe: An analysis. *Zimbabwe Education Review*, 12(3), 101-115.

- Gwanbata, K., Mungai, D., & Mwenda, S. (2023). Local government and participatory budgeting in Zimbabwe: Lessons from Harare. *African Journal of Public Administration*, 11(1), 55-76.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Beacon Press.
- Hajer, M. A., & Wagenaar, H. (2018). *Deliberative policy analysis: Understanding governance in the network society*. Cambridge University Press.
- Halcomb, E. J., & Gilmartin, M. (2019). The focus group discussion in qualitative research: A guide for novice researchers. *Contemporary Nurse*, 55(3), 1-10.
- Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2020). *Research ethics for social scientists* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Kabeer, N., & Khatun, F. (2018). Economic empowerment of women in Bangladesh: What do we know? *Journal of Development Studies*, 54(2), 201-215.
- Kandawire, I., & Chivasa, S. (2022). The role of politics in citizen engagement: Beyond the rhetoric of participatory governance in Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Political Science*, 17(3), 119-138.
- Kharanto, K., Namasasu, T., & Muchemi, C. (2020). Digital citizen participation: Global perspectives and local implications. *Urban Governance Review*, 4(2), 45-63.
- Kitzinger, J. (2020). Focus groups with users and providers of health care. In *Researching health: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods* (2nd ed., pp. 112-133). SAGE Publications.
- Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.A. (2015) *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 5th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lawan, B. Assessing the Effectiveness of Citizens Engagement Initiative in Local Government Decision Making Process in Bursari Local Government Area, Yobe State, Nigeria.
- Leckenby, J. D., et al. (2021). Defining and evaluating social media sampling: Conventional and probability approaches. *Journal of Social Media in Society*, 10(1), 15-29.

- Makoni, J., & Muchinda, V. (2023). Social dynamics and citizen participation in local governance: An analysis of community perspectives in Harare. *Zimbabwe Journal of Sociology*, 12(4), 77-91.
- Mavhunga, M., & Mahanya, D. (2023). The interplay of qualitative and quantitative research in understanding citizen engagement in local governance: A Zimbabwean perspective. *Zimbabwe Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 12(3), 99-118.
- Merriam, S.B. & Tisdell, E.J. (2019) *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 5th edn. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mnangagwa, B., & Chirimuuta, R. (2024). Marginalization in citizen participation: Exploring the experiences of underrepresented groups in Harare's governance processes. *Journal of Social Policy and Administration*, 58(3), 361-379.
- Moyo, R. (2024). Historical and political determinants of citizen participation in governance: A case study of Harare. *African Journal of Political Studies*, 19(1), 77-92.
- Moyo, S. (2021). Participatory governance and citizen engagement in Zimbabwe: A review. *Journal of African Political Science*, 26(4), 321-338.
- Mupfurutsa, M. (2022). Trust deficits and citizen participation in Zimbabwe's urban councils. *African Journal of Governance & Development*, 7(1), 34-49.
- Mutasa, C. & Chitiga, R. (2021) 'Citizen engagement and local governance in Zimbabwe: challenges and opportunities', *African Journal of Public Administration*, 14(2), pp. 45-62.
- Nakabugo, M., Tumusiime, E. & Bwambale, T. (2024) 'Adapting Structured Interviews for Low-Literacy Populations in African Cities', *African Journal of Governance Studies*, 10(1), pp. 77-92.
- Ncube, T. (2022). Gender and civic engagement in Zimbabwe: Trends and challenges. *Zimbabwean Journal of Social Development*, 8(2), 50-65.
- Ndlovu, S., & Dube, A. (2023). The role of public trust in effective participatory governance: Evidence from Zimbabwe. *Zambezia: The Zimbabwe Journal of Language and Literature*, 50(1), 1-15.

- Nyamunda, P. (2023). Long-term residents and civic participation in Harare. *Urban Studies Journal*, 60(2), 215-230.
- Pallant, J. (2020). *SPSS Survival Manual (7th ed.)*. Open University Press.
- Patel, R. & Joseph, A. (2016) *Research Methods in Social Sciences*, 3rd edn. London: Sage Publications.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C.M. & Ormston, R. (2019) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, 3rd edn. London: Sage Publications.
- Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2013). *Research methods for social work (7th ed.)*. Cengage Learning.
- Schugurensky, D. (2024) 'Participatory budgeting and local governance innovation', *Journal of Civic Engagement*, 2(1), pp. 45–61.
- Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R. (2016) *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach*, 7th edn. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Sharma, M., & Mathew, G. (2019). Citizen engagement and participatory governance in developing countries: A literature review. *Review of Public Administration*, 32(1), 89-101.
- Sibanda, T. (2021). Digital divides and citizen participation in Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 45(3), 543-558.
- Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative research*. SAGE Publications.
- Steinberg, D.M. (2015) *Research Methodologies in Social Sciences: Qualitative Approaches*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. (2020) *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *International Journal of Medical Education*, 2, 53-55.

- Thompson, S.K. (2022) *Sampling*, 4th edn. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Tizora, H., & Nehanda, T. (2023). Trust and governance in Zimbabwe: Historical legacies and contemporary challenges. *Studies in African Political Economy*, 30(1), 15–29.
- Transparency International Zimbabwe (2023) *Enhancing Citizen Engagement in Local Governance: Annual Report 2023*. Harare: TI-Zimbabwe.
- Tshuma, T., & Nyoni, S. (2023). Adapting citizen engagement strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic: Lessons from Harare, Zimbabwe. *Zimbabwe Journal of Public Health Policy*, 10(1), 52-69.
- Vaismoradi, M., Jones, J., Turunen, H. & Snelgrove, S. (2019) ‘Theme Development in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis’, *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 9(5), pp. 23–34.
- Wampler, B. (2012). *Engaging the poor in budgeting: A global survey of participatory budgeting practices*. Open Society Foundations.
- World Bank (2023) *Zimbabwe: Public Financial Management and Devolution Report*. Harare: World Bank Country Office.
- Zvoushe, T., & Zhou, L. (2021). Socio-economic factors influencing civic engagement in Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Socio-Economics*, 4(2), 77-92.

## APPENDIX I: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT



**A Research Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of The  
Requirements for the Degree Of  
Master's Degree in Public Policy and Governance**

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Rodney. I am a final year master's student at Africa University. As part of the fulfillment of the partial requirements to the completion of the Master's degree, I am required to undertake research. The title of my research is, *"Strategies for enhancing citizen participations in budgetary processes of devolved local governments in Zimbabwe: The case of city of Harare"*.

May you take time from your busy schedule to complete the attached questionnaire as honestly and objectively as possible? The data gathered will be treated in strict confidence and a summary of the results will be available on request. All the data gathered in the research shall be used for academic purposes only.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence.

Thank you

---

Rodney

Cellphone:

Email:

“I have read the foregoing information about this study, or it has been read to me. An opportunity to ask questions and discuss about the study was given to me. All my questions were responded to, and I am satisfied. All information about this study has been made available to me. I am fully aware that I can withdraw from this study at any time without giving reasons and that my withdrawal will not have any negative repercussions. I am fully aware that my data will remain anonymous and confidential unless stated otherwise. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study”. To show that you have agreed to take part in this study or otherwise, you are required to tick the appropriate checkbox in the introductory section below:

Agree

Disagree

## Section A: Demographic Information

Please fill in the following demographic details. Your responses will remain confidential and will only be used for academic purposes.

Variable	Response Options
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
Age Group	<input type="checkbox"/> 18–25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26–35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36–45 <input type="checkbox"/> 46–55 <input type="checkbox"/> 56 and above
Educational Level	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____
Occupation	<input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Employed <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/> Retired
Residential Area in Harare	<input type="checkbox"/> Central Business District <input type="checkbox"/> High-density suburb <input type="checkbox"/> Low-density suburb <input type="checkbox"/> Peri-urban
Duration of Residency in Harare	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 years <input type="checkbox"/> 5–10 years <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 years
Have you ever participated in a City of Harare budgetary process?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

## Section B: Strategies that the City of Harare Council is using to engage citizens in local budgetary processes.

This section seeks to understand the current strategies being used by the City of Harare Council to involve citizens in budgetary processes. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale: **1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>1 (Strongly Agree)</b>	<b>2 (Agree)</b>	<b>3 (Neutral)</b>	<b>4 (Disagree)</b>	<b>5 (Strongly Disagree)</b>
<b>The City of Harare uses public meetings to engage citizens in budgetary processes.</b>					
<b>Citizens are engaged through consultative workshops organized by the Council.</b>					
<b>Online platforms (social media, website) are used to communicate budgetary issues.</b>					
<b>The City of Harare uses surveys and feedback forms to gather citizens' views.</b>					
<b>Community representatives are involved in budget consultations.</b>					

**Section C: Effectiveness of the strategies employed by the City of Harare Council in fostering citizen participation in local budgetary processes.**

This section focuses on evaluating how effective the Council’s strategies have been in encouraging citizens to participate in budgetary processes. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale: **1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>1 (Strongly Agree)</b>	<b>2 (Agree)</b>	<b>3 (Neutral)</b>	<b>4 (Disagree)</b>	<b>5 (Strongly Disagree)</b>
<b>Public meetings are well attended by residents.</b>					
<b>Citizens’ contributions during consultations are taken into consideration.</b>					
<b>Online platforms effectively enhance citizen participation.</b>					
<b>Council communication on budgetary processes is clear and accessible.</b>					
<b>The current engagement strategies have increased public</b>					

trust in local governance.					
----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

**Section D: Factors influencing the effectiveness of the strategies that the City of Harare Council is using to enhance citizen participation in local budgetary processes.**

This section explores the factors that may affect how successful the strategies for citizen participation are. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale: **1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree**

Statement	1 (Strongly Agree)	2 (Agree)	3 (Neutral)	4 (Disagree)	5 (Strongly Disagree)
Lack of awareness limits citizen participation in budgetary processes.					
Political interference affects the effectiveness of participation strategies.					
Limited access to digital platforms reduces citizen involvement.					

<b>Financial and time constraints discourage citizens from participating.</b>					
<b>Low levels of trust in Council reduce citizens' willingness to engage.</b>					

**Section E: Strategies for improving citizen participation in local budgetary processes within the City of Harare Council.**

This section seeks to gather your views on possible strategies that can strengthen citizen participation in Harare's budgetary processes. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale: **1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>1 (Strongly Agree)</b>	<b>2 (Agree)</b>	<b>3 (Neutral)</b>	<b>4 (Disagree)</b>	<b>5 (Strongly Disagree)</b>
<b>Increased use of digital platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook) would improve participation.</b>					
<b>More community awareness campaigns should</b>					

be conducted before budget meetings.					
Citizen feedback should be visibly incorporated into final budget decisions.					
Partnerships with community-based organizations can improve participation.					
Decentralized consultation meetings in all wards would enhance inclusiveness.					

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Objective 1: To explore the strategies that the City of Harare Council is using to engage citizens in local budgetary processes.**

1. In your view, what strategies has the City of Harare Council been using to involve citizens in budgetary processes?
2. Can you describe how effective public meetings or consultative workshops have been in engaging residents?

**Objective 2: To assess the effectiveness of the strategies employed by the City of Harare Council in fostering citizen participation in local budgetary processes.**

3. How effective do you think public meetings have been in encouraging citizens to participate in budget discussions?
4. In your opinion, does the Council take citizens' contributions into account when making budgetary decisions?

**Objective 3: To examine the factors influencing the effectiveness of the strategies that the City of Harare Council is using to enhance citizen participation in local budgetary processes.**

5. What challenges do you think prevent citizens from fully participating in budgetary processes?
6. How does political influence or interference affect citizen participation in budget consultations?

**Objective 4: To recommend strategies for improving citizen participation in local budgetary processes within the City of Harare Council.**

7. What strategies do you think could be introduced to improve citizen participation in budgetary processes?
8. How can the use of digital platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, websites) be enhanced to increase inclusiveness?

**Comments.....**  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.**

**THE END!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

## **Appendix ii: Informed Consent**

### **Informed Consent Form**

#### **ENGLISH**

#### **TITLE OF THE STUDY:**

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING CITIZEN PARTICIPATIONS IN  
BUDGETARY PROCESSES OF DEVOLVED LOCAL  
GOVERNMENTS IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF CITY OF  
HARARE.

**RESEARCHER: Rodney**

**PHONE NUMBER:**

**SUPERVISOR:**

**PHONE NUMBER:**

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

You are invited to participate in a research study that seeks to explore policy strategies for the enhancement of educational equity in rural schools with specific focus on primary schools in Chipinge District. This study will take place in Chipinge Central Circuit. The research questions will assist in understanding the situation of educational equity and provision of quality education in rural primary schools.

#### **STUDY PROCEDURES AND DURATION:**

At the time of enrolment of this study, which is (), eligible participants should be of sound mind and those who are eligible to participate must be willing and able to give written consent to let them take part in this study. The actual participation in the interview should take about 20 minutes. The information captured in the study may be given to regulatory authorities should they wish to see it for their regulatory duties. The bodies regulating this study will be Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as well as the Africa University Research Ethics Committee (AUREC).

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

The information to be collected for this study has been described in this consent form. Records identifying you will be kept confidential and to the extent permitted by law, will not be made publicly available. Your name and the school you represent will not be captured and access to the information collected will be limited to the researcher or study personnel.

**POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORT INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY:**

You may experience discomfort in answering some questions, as they might be very personal. However, you do not have to answer a question if you are not comfortable in doing so. There are no expected physical risks to you in participating in this study.

**BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY:**

There are no direct professional benefit or other advantages for taking part in this study. However, the information obtained in this study will be useful for researchers to publish accurate information that will assist the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in making and implementing policies that may contribute towards effective enhancing of policy strategies to promote equity in education.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:**

We hope that you will agree to take part in this study. However, you do not have to take part in this study if you do not want to. If you decide that, you do not want to participate in this study, that decision will not affect your working environment at the school. If you do decide that you want to take part now but then change your mind later, you may withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason.

**OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:**

Before you agree to participate in this study, please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that may be unclear to you. You may take as much time as necessary to think it over. For any other questions that you may have about this study now or in the future, please contact the Researcher, Rodney.

**Appendix iii: Council Study Authorization**  
HUMAN CAPITAL DEPARTMENT  
TOWN HOUSE. HARARE, ZIMBABWE  
POST OFFICE BOX 990  
TELEPHONE 752979 / 753000  
EMAIL: hrd@hararecity.co.zw  
ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO HUMAN CAPITAL DIPECTOP



**CITY OF HARARE**

Africa University P. O.  
BOX 1320  
Mutare

17 September 2025

**RE: AUTHORITY TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH: RODNEY C. SAMBA**

This letter serves as authority for Rodney C. Samba to undertake a research survey on the topic:  
"STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING CITIZEN PARTICIPATIONS IN BUDGETARY PROCESSES OF DEVOLVED  
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN

**ZIMBABWE : THE CASE OF CITY OF HARARE."**

The City of Harare has no financial obligation and neither shall it render any further assistance in  
the conduct of the research. The researcher is however requested to avail a soft and hard copy of  
the research to the undersigned so that residents of Harare can benefit out of it. The research  
should not be used for any other purpose other than the study purpose specified.

This letter is issued upon payment of 5usd administration fee. Receipt  
number: 15678091

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Duve'.

**MR J. DUVE ACTING HUMAN CAPITAL  
DIRECTOR**



## Appendix iv: Africa University Research Ethics Committee



*“Investing in Africa’s future”*

AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (AUREC)

---

*P.O. Box 1320 Mutare, Zimbabwe, Off Nyanga Road, Old Mutare-Tel (+263-20)  
60075/60026/61611 Fax:  
(+263 20) 61785 Website: [www.africau.edu](http://www.africau.edu)*

Ref: AU4014/25

26 September, 2025

**RODNEY CHESTERFIELD SAMBA**

C/O Africa University

Box 1320

### MUTARE

**RE: STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN BUDGETARY PROCESSES OF DEVOLVED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF CITY OF HARARE**

Thank you for submitting the above-titled proposal to the Africa University Research Ethics Committee for review. Please be advised that AUREC has reviewed and approved your application to conduct the above research.

The approval is based on the following. a) Research proposal

- **APPROVAL NUMBER** AUREC 4014/25  
This number should be used on all correspondence, consent forms, and appropriate documents
- **AUREC MEETING DATE** NA
- **APPROVAL DATE** September 26, 2025
- **EXPIRATION DATE** September 26, 2026
- **TYPE OF MEETING:** Expedited  
After the expiration date, this research may only continue upon renewal. A progress report on a standard AUREC form should be submitted a month before the expiration date for renewal purposes.
- **SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS** All serious problems concerning subject safety must be reported to AUREC within 3 working days on the standard AUREC form.
- **MODIFICATIONS** Prior AUREC approval is required before implementing any changes in the proposal (including changes in the consent documents)

- **TERMINATION OF STUDY** Upon termination of the study a report has to be submitted to AUREC.



**Yours Faithfully**

*Mary Chinzou*

**MARY CHINZOU  
FOR CHAIRPERSON**

**AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**