

THE ROLE OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE ENHANCEMENT THROUGH E-GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY OF LUSAKA CITY COUNCIL, ZAMBIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates how e-governance could be used to foster the engagement of citizens in the process of democratic local governance with an emphasis on the Lusaka City Council. Democratic governance involves principles of openness, responsibility, and involvement. The introduction of e-governance brings new opportunities for improving indirect communication between the government and the citizens. This paper seeks to assess the extent of the impact of executed e-governance projects in Lusaka City Council on democratic politics and results. The data source is also diverse based on the view that both qualitative and quantitative data will be used in the study. Interviews with local inhabitants and councilors are conducted to educate the authors about their experiences with and revelations about e-governance. Furthermore, a content audit and an analysis of the documents and e-governance applications existing in LCC is carried out to examine the ways of its accessibility and utility as well as its effects. From research carried out on the topic, it can be deduced that e-governance has enhanced citizens' engagement in local governance. Availability and use of information through digital platforms have boosted politically responsive governance output in that it has raised the standards of accountability. Also, other forms of communication that have come with the use of the Internet include discussion forums and avenues of giving feedback online has allowed citizens to give more opinions on any issue or decision-making process. The study also outlines some barriers including; digital literacy and digital infrastructure as factors that influence the success of e-governance programs in Zambia. Thus, the research indicates that while e-governance has the capability to enhance democratic accountability at the grassroots, its effectiveness remains contingent on the existing challenges' eradication and enabling everyone to engage. The case of the Lusaka City Council teaches other municipalities noble lessons on the prospects of e-governance regarding citizens' engagement and the fortunes of democracy.

Keywords: *Lusaka, Citizen Engagement, E-governance, Public Service, Democratic e-governance, Participatory governance*

1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy and its related hallmarks include openness, responsiveness, and the en-gagement of the electorate. These principles make it certain that the actions that are made by the government are in harmony with the people and hence the notion of government by the people as well as for the people is promoted. In the modern world especially in the era of globalization the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have brought significant changes in the governments' relations with the citizens. This process is envisioned in what is referred to as e-governance. E-governance can be defined as the process of applying information and communication technologies to cost effectively improve the services provided to the citizens, business, and civil servants [1]. That covers provision of e-services, e-communication, and e-participation that include, but are not limited to e-commerce, social networks, web conferences, and online voting. E-governance has the advantages of increased efficiency, cost cutting, better services, and opportunities for people's involvement [2]. The case study to be used in this paper is the Lusaka city which is in Zambia; the city has initiated e-Government strategies to address the challenges faced in the process of decentralized governance to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and openness in the provision and access to governance services [3]. Such democratic participation entails enhanced use of Information Communication Technology solutions in the running of local administration, a state that is evidenced by Lusaka City Council that has taken the following actions in the enhancement of e-governance; These are aimed at closing the gap between the government and the people in as much as making the governance processes more people friendly.

However, the implementation of e-governance also poses certain problems which must be looked into. Challenges like digital literacy, the use of technologies, and the digital divide can meddle with e-governance ventures, especially in the developing world- in this case Zambia [4]. This paper examines the governance impact of e-governance in Lusaka City Council for the improvement of citizens' engagement and promoting democracy at the local level.

1.1 Problem Statement

As much as the e-governance has the potential of improving governance, when practiced in Lusaka, it faces several problems that reduce its

capability in the promoting of citizen participation and the growth of democracy. Some of the primary challenges include the digital divide that is where some people and societies are connected to digital tools while others are not. Due to the socio-economic differentiation, geography and inadequate infrastructures, challenges to digital are seen in Lusaka. On this account, e-governance initiatives of the different states are able to go half way only because a significant section of the population is excluded from digital governance processes. However, use of digital resources is still an issue largely due to poor digital literacy skills. It is indicated that more than half of the people in Lusaka are not capable of making proper use of the e-governance technologies that are being implemented. Lack of adequate digital literacy leaves the citizens unable to do online transactions, express themselves in online platforms or even explain how to go about government websites. Such lack of digital literacy are a major con-strain to inclusiveness and efficiency of e governance. Technological infrastructure is an-other important factor of the same note. E-governance is very sensitive to the technological infrastructure and especially the access to the internet or any other means of connectivity as well as availability of power. In Lusaka, there are deficiencies in the physical facilities, for example; poor access to internet connection and unstable power supplies which affect the operations of e-governance systems. Furthermore, in the areas of e-governance, limited legislative reforms and political will, civil servants' resistance to change, threats to data privacy and security are some of the socio-political factors that hinder successful implementations of e-governance projects. In order to prevent or eliminate these barriers, all the personnel that are present in an organization need to contribute. Therefore, meant to measure the extant of e-governance in Lusaka and the benefits of these activities in demographically enhancing citizens' interaction and good governance. As a result, the following overview outlines the case of Lusaka City Council, the findings of this report about the success of e-governance and the solutions for mitigating the obstacles met in improving the communication with citizens by using IT solutions.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of e-governance initiatives by Lusaka City Council in enhancing citizen engagement.

2. To identify the challenges faced by citizens in engaging with e-governance platforms in Lusaka.

3. To assess the impact of citizen engagement through e-governance on democratic governance in Lusaka City Council.

1.3 Research Questions

RQ1: How effective are the e-governance initiatives implemented by the Lusaka City Council in enhancing citizen engagement ?

RQ2: What are the main challenges faced by citizens in Lusaka when engaging with e-governance platforms ?

RQ3: How does citizen engagement through e-governance impact the overall democratic governance of Lusaka City Council ?

1.4 Significance of the Study

In this section, the study aims to state and explain the reason why it is relevant in filling the existing gap in literature.

The findings of this report are useful in understanding the prospects of e-governance in improving the sphere of democratic governance in the urban context especially in the developing world. Thus, using the Lusaka City Council, the work highlights the positive tendencies in e-governance and the stages of their development, as well as the problems that may be encountered by the subject during the implementation of reforms. The outcome adds to the existing knowledge base of e-governance to the extent that it provides practical suggestions to policy makers, governments and other related stakeholders planning and implementing e-governance strategies. If Lusaka City Council addresses the challenges that have been revealed in this study, then there would be increased citizens' participation, efficient provision of public services and the general growth of democratic principles at the local level.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The argument of this research is anchored in the theoretical frameworks of participatory democracy, which emphasizes increased political participation by citizens. Participatory democracy posits that the active involvement of citizens in political processes enhances the legitimacy, responsiveness, and quality of democratic

governance. Carole Pateman's Theory of Participatory Democracy argues that participatory democracy raises the level of political competency among citizens and improves the overall quality of democracy. One of the arguments that is presented in the article [12] is that the amount of engagement that individuals have in the decision-making processes of political institutions is directly proportional to the degree to which they are able to grasp and exert influence on political matters. In order to nurture a population that is both more informed and more engaged, this concept highlights the necessity of building channels through which people may participate in government in a meaningful manner. This is with the goal of cultivating a population that is more involved. A typology of citizen involvement that illustrates the numerous degrees of power that individuals may wield in the process of decision-making is provided by Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen involvement. This typology serves a goal that is comparable to the one described above. There are eight distinct levels of involvement, ranging from nonparticipation (manipulation and treatment) to degrees of tokenism (informing, consultation, and placation) to degrees of citizen power (partnership, delegated authority, and citizen control). Nonparticipation pertains to either the manipulation or treatment of individuals. The degrees of engagement are broken down into these eight distinct categories by the [11]. In addition to bringing attention to the need of genuine participatory procedures that go beyond mere tokenism in order to empower people in the processes of government, this ladder is useful in conceptualizing the many different degrees of citizen influence.

Furthermore, Archon Fung's concept of Mini publics, which are small, representative groups of citizens convened to deliberate on policy issues, provides another theoretical underpinning for this study. The authors [6] suggests that Mini publics can enhance democratic legitimacy by incorporating diverse perspectives and fostering informed public deliberation. These deliberative bodies, such as citizens' assemblies and deliberative polls, serve as microcosms of the broader public, allowing for in-depth discussion and informed decision-making on complex policy issues. These theoretical frameworks collectively offer a basis for exploring how e-governance can be used to strengthen citizen engagement and improve democratic administration. By leveraging ICTs, e-governance initiatives can create new channels for participatory democracy, enabling citizens to access

information, provide feedback, and engage in decision-making processes more effectively. The theories of Pateman, Arnstein, and Fung emphasize the need for inclusive and empowering participatory mechanisms, which are essential for the success of e-governance in enhancing democratic governance. In the context of Lusaka City Council, the application of these theories can provide insights into how e-governance initiatives can be designed and implemented to maximize citizen participation and influence in local governance. Understanding the theoretical foundations of participatory democracy helps to identify best practices and potential challenges in leveraging e-governance to foster a more engaged and empowered citizenry.

1.6 Scope of this study

This paper aims at waving an empirical perspective on.

I. Digital Literacy: Level of digital literacy might also differ from one respondent to another and the difference might ultimately impact respondents' interaction with e-governance platforms, their perceptions, and experiences.

II. Technological Infrastructure: Some participants stated that unstable internet connection and electricity hence may hamper their usage of e-governance services, which may affect the study's conclusion on the degree of engagement.

III. Response Bias: Interview and survey data may contain bias because the respondents would not be truthful especially for reasons that are embarrassing or are regarded as socially undesirable.

IV. Generalizability: Thus it is possible that the results obtained from this study conducted in Lusaka City Council may not be reflective of other cities or regions in Zambia or other developing nations with different socio-demo structural characteristics and physical development.

V. Geographic Focus: This research work targets only the Lusaka City Council hence leaving out other cities or provinces in Zambia.

VI. E-Governance Initiatives: The study focuses on e-governance projects carried out by Lusaka City Council only, not any other forms of citizens' participation or governance.

VII. Time Frame: It examines many of the e-governance activities and consumers' involvement over a certain period of time and thus, covers the most up-to-date activities and implementation.

VIII. Stakeholder Involvement: Respondents consist of government administration, ICT specialists, and residents, which give the throughout understanding of the matters.

1.7 Operational Definitions

1. E-Governance: The application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by government for the improvement of the government services, for the delivery of the services, for the transparency and active participation of the citizens [14].

2. Citizen Engagement: It is the manner in which people participate in the formulation and implementation of policies, decisions and actions of the government designed to enhance the delivery of better and satisfactory political accountability.

3. Digital Divide: An area of research that looks into the divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in the users of information and communication technologies, based on socio-economic differences, geographical location, and infrastructural limitations within various societies [7].

4. Digital Literacy: The competence of users in the use of technology items for information search, boards, and online operations [7].

5. Democratic Governance: A system of government in which the citizen is actively involved in the decision-making process of their government with particular regard to its policies and programmes [6].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Democratic Governance and Citizen Engagement

Democratic governance means people's participation in the decision-making processes of their government to ensure the occurrences correspond with the desires and needs of the public [6]. Public participation remains an essential aspect in ensuring that the public is informed, holds leaders to account, and gets quality service deliveries [2, 12]. All over the globe, the principles of democratic governance have been adopted as a core advancement pillar in the realization of development and social harmony. However, governments should encourage public participation in the decision-making processes; the United Nations supports transparent and accountable governance yearning [14]. As part of this framework, e-governance hence supports ICTs in increasing the participation of the people and

enhancing the delivery of services. For instance, Estonia is now a world pioneer in e-governance and comes up with a range of services concerning its citizens. The e-residency option for people of different countries to open Estonia's electronic services is another proof of the opportunities that e-governance can open for a country [17,18]. Likewise there are nations like South Korea and Singapore that have integrated highly sophisticated e-governance systems for improving the involvement of public as well as the efficiency of the government functioning [19]. Thus, the level of e-governance in Africa remains rather dissimilar across the continent. The African Union's comprehensive plan for the year 2063 on sustainable development also stresses on good governance, democracy and the active participation of the citizens. Some African countries have successfully embarked on the enhancement of e-governance to improve on its efficiency in addressing the public. For instance, Rwanda was appreciated for implementing e-governance not only by launching Irembo- an online gateway that offers preliminary access to the governmental services [20]. Another example is the Kenya central government's Huduma Kenya program that was launched to deliver integrated services in both web based and physical one stop centres with goals of increasing organizational efficiency and citizens' satisfaction [21]. At the local level, Lusaka City Council in Zambia has implemented several e-governance initiatives to improve citizen engagement and democratic governance. These initiatives include online platforms for accessing municipal services, digital communication channels for public consultations, and electronic forums for citizen participation in decision-making processes [10]. Despite these efforts, challenges such as the digital divide, limited digital literacy, and infrastructural deficiencies persist, hindering the full potential of e-governance in enhancing democratic governance [7]. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including investment in technological infrastructure, capacity building for digital skills, and fostering a culture of openness and transparency within government institutions. By examining the global, regional, and local perspectives on democratic governance and citizen engagement, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of e-governance initiatives in Lusaka City Council and identify strategies for enhancing citizen participation and democratic governance through digital means.

2.2 E-Governance: Definition and Benefits

E-governance entails the management and delivery of services by government entities through the support of ICTs that enhances citizens' participation and increase the level of transparency [14]. This paper identifies the use of e-governance as enhancing governance through a combination of internet-based tools and technology in the government operations; cutting down expense and opening new channels through which the public can participate [8, 11]. Across the world, e-governance has been acknowledged as a vehicle to innovate the existing structure of public sector and improve performance of government agencies. E-governance initiatives have been embraced by nations of the world as a tool in enhancing efficiency in delivery of services, courtesy and introduction of transparency and citizens' participation in governance. For example, "The Digital Government Strategy," of the United States focuses on the use of technology in the reformation of the government services [22]. The UK's agenda to go 'Digital by Default' means that most of the planned transfigurations will serve to assist most people to interact more simply and conveniently with government [23].

Today, e-governance in Sweden can be characterized as well advanced, starting from the electronic services for the fulfillment of state and municipal functions in the spheres of taxes, customs, civil servants, public procurement, or social security. Thanks to the Swedish government's concerns with the issue of digital democracy and the position where user experience is highly valued, e-governance platforms of the country can be considered as some of the most effective globally [24]. Regarding the expected question, it can be seen that the implementation and adoption of e-governance is different for different African countries, although, positive improvements can be seen in some of the nations. Many e-governance strategies are being applied in a bid to enhance the capacity of the government and its delivery services in the continent. For instance, Nigeria's National e-Government Strategy seeks to apply ICTs in the operations of the nation's government, with the intention of improving on service delivery, as well as citizen interaction [25]. South Africa's has also performed relatively well with its "South African Government Online" website which brings together frequently used government services and information [26].

In Kenya, the most famous W4 project which is Kenya's "Huduma Kenya" where the broad channel strategies are Online services, mobiles and Huduma Kenya desks. This approach seeks to enhance these and other related goals in expending

and offering public services [27]. In the study area, Lusaka City Council practices e-governance as a way of increasing the efficiency in service delivery and fulfilling its mandate of interacting with the citizens. Some of the city's digital management solutions include the following: The city uses various online applications that help the citizen to acquire various service delivery from the city as well as participate on various consultation exercises in the running of the city [10]. A notable effort in this regard is the Lusaka City Council's online service delivery platform where the residents can pursue numerous services such as paying bills, permits, and government information. It is desired from this platform to make provincial services more responsive and accessible for the people of Lusaka [10]. However, despite these advancements, there are still some hurdles that hinder the successful implementation of e-governance in Lusaka; the hurdles include; Poor citizens' internet connection limited digital skills among the citizens Infrastructural deficiencies that hinder the proper use of e-governance. Managing these challenges is important for unlocking the opportunity of the e-governance in improving local governance and delivery [7].

2.3 E-Governance and Citizen Engagement

E-governance initiatives deeply influence the participation of the citizens by increasing the availability and openness of the administrative procedures. Compared to conventional forms of governance, e-governance is more convenient since it is done through digital platforms, more citizens' involvement and citizens can express themselves through a process that may not be easily done through traditional means [4, 14]. Worldwide, e-governance has changed the interaction between citizens and government through incorporating ICTs into the processes of governance. For example, the United States' so called the "Open Government Data" is an activity that increases openness by sharing the data collected by the government through various technological means. This has the effect of increasing people's political consciousness as well as enabling the citizenry to critically monitoring and actively engage in government activities [15]. While in the European Union in order to improve the establishment of cross-border digital services and the availability of public sector information the "Digital Single Market" strategy is used. The EU's e-government services include the European Citizen Card and EU Login through which citizens are easily connected with various institutions within the governments hence are able to give their opinions to those institutions [5].

In Australia, a particular agency called the 'Digital Transformation Agency' super-vises different e-governance programs that primarily aim in enhancing the quality of public services and enhancing the citizens' participation. The "myGov" is a single point of access to interact with multiple online services availed by the government of Australia hence enhancing ease of access [10]. In the African region particularly, a management of information and communication technologies and especially e-governance programs are being adopted to boost the citizens' participation. M-Government for Development in Kenya has come up with several new structures that enable the citizens to interact with the government electronically. For instance, there is the "E-Citizen" which enables Kenyans to access the government services, customer feedback as well as give their insights on activities within the government consultancies, which has been enhancing the engagement as well as the provision of service within the government system [9].

In South Africa, "e-Services" portal offers an array of services instantly and free-of-charge within the reach of electronic devices. The platform not only improves convenience, it also advances transparency and engagement. Carol is able to track the progress of her requests & give feedback directly back to government departments [13]. The African Development Bank's "e-Government and ICT for Governance" project seeks to help member countries develop the critical systems needed, such as enterprise architecture models of e-governance service portfolios. It will develop a digital infrastructure and promote the diffusion of Digital Literacy across Africa in order to facilitate common form/substrate for public engagement throughout the continent [14]. At the local level, the Lusaka City Council has taken steps to encourage citizen involvement through e-governance. Platforms through which residents can access basic municipal services, complain and take part in public consultations like the Lusaka City Council website and mobile applications In the process, these digital tools seek to improve transparency and provision of civic services for Lusaka's residents [10]. However, these advances are not without their share of challenges as limited digital literacy and access to technology may hinder the effectiveness of such e-governance initiatives in Lusaka due poor infrastructure. These problems are being tackled with initiatives such as community e-awareness programmes and infrastructure growth also adds to the cause by improving internet reach [7]. In conclusion, e-governance initiatives are central to fostering citizen engagement as citizens seek digital avenues which enable more accessibilities that enhance transparency and interactions between the

different stakeholders on one hand while ensuring accessibility by government entities from another. But, particularly in the case of doing so at a scale to drive meaningful and inclusive civic engagement - we have to zero in on regional or local issues.

2.4 Earlier Research on Citizen Participation in Democratic Governance

The advancement of participatory democracy and citizen engagement establishes a foundation for modern local governance, with the expectation that such participation will enhance the legitimacy, democracy, and efficacy of the public sector [29, 30, 31, 32]. This development highlights the connection between local government entities and social stakeholders, including residents, organizations, and enterprises. In this regard, establishing transparent democratic governance is a crucial aspect of the interaction among many stakeholders [33].

Interactive governance aims to address the deficiencies of earlier public administration theories that overlooked the significance of civil society and saw individuals as passive receivers or customers. Interactive governance reintegrates individuals into the core of government, hence challenging institutionally focused governing paradigms [34]. It enables people, together with other stakeholders, to enter policy arenas and exert influence on political decision-making at an early stage [35].

The objective is to unite many stakeholders to address social issues by promoting contact among civic, public, and private entities [36]. This research defines interactive governance as a comprehensive framework for local government that fosters a democratic, pluralistic, and multi-stakeholder approach.

Citizen engagement is a component of local-level interaction. Citizen participation refers to the involvement of residents in local decision-making and activities, enabling them to affect outcomes rather than only delegating authority to elected officials [37]. Drawing from prior research, we delineate three significant concurrent changes to ascertain the origins of mainstreaming citizen involvement inside public sector organizations. Initially, public involvement has evolved to include the accessibility of government to improve openness, democracy, and engagement [38]. Secondly, it is seen as a reaction to the crisis of representative democracy [35, 39, 31, 40, 41]. Thirdly, engagement with people is seen essential for addressing complex social issues [42]. All these streams underscore the need of augmenting individuals' abilities to engage in and impact local decision-making.

Governance ideas and practices have prioritized cooperation and interaction among many actors in facilitating public engagement. The enhancement of citizen involvement in local government entities is associated with numerous concurrent and intersecting methodologies and concepts, including net-worked governance [43], interactive governance [44, 45, 46], new public governance [47], collaborative governance [48, 49, 50], participatory governance [51, 52], community engagement [53], and public value [54]. These methodologies originate from diverse theoretical foundations, however they all underscore the increasing significance of contact between governments and individuals.

Instead of seeing interactive governance as a distinct paradigm, we suggest that it exists on a continuum with network governance. The emphasis is on the interplay of various societal actors. Interactive governance is a method used by public sector organizations to address democratic growth [35, 40]. This article presents interactive governance as a comprehensive concept that characterizes the transition in local government and administration towards prioritizing contact, cooperation, and partnerships with local stakeholders, especially people.

Interactive governance and citizen engagement have been extensively studied. The literature on public governance has extensively examined the objectives of citizen participation and interactive governance [35, 55, 56; 45, 50], as well as the anticipated advantages of these processes [55, 31]. Moreover, participatory tools and procedures have been extensively examined [57, 58, 59, 37]. Issues concerning citizen participation have been scrutinized for decades, particularly regarding representation, legitimacy, accountability, leadership, and the associated costs [60, 55, 6, 61, 62, 45]. Prior researches indicate that the institutionalization of public engagement necessitates more participatory governance models [63, 64, 36, 46].

Nevertheless, little focus has been directed towards the integration of citizen engagement inside public sector organizations and their governance [47, 65]. From an organizational perspective, public involvement is at odds with conventional bureaucratic governance procedures. Consequently, integrating public engagement into governance is a challenging endeavor. It cannot only be integrated into existing systems but must be executed via governance [66]. Academics have noted that integrating public engagement into government is challenging due to the complex relationships between citizen involvement and established democratic institutions. The omission of community engagement may yield unforeseen

repercussions; initiatives aimed at bolstering legitimacy via increased citizen involvement [67] might paradoxically lead to reduced confidence and degraded legitimacy of local government [68, 69].

To address the issues related to public participation, it is essential to comprehend the several facets of integrating citizen involvement in governance. Authors in [61] underscore the need of examining instances of successful and unsuccessful citizen involvement to illustrate its advantages and disadvantages. This study seeks to address the need highlighted in prior research for a more comprehensive examination and understanding of the integration of public engagement within government structures.

2.5 Challenges in E-Governance Implementation

E-governance initiatives are an attempt to use digital technology in order to boost the quality and speed of government work, simplify access by citizens at all levels so that governance become more transparent, responsive. The delivery of these initiatives can however be difficult and fraught with pitfalls which could really affect their outcomes. Here the major hurdles in e-governance implementations are discussed under various headings like digital literacy, technological infrastructure, financial implications and direct economic cost of technology access etc. It also delineates methods to alleviate these problems.

2.6 Digital Literacy

One of the key elements for engaging with e-governance platforms is digital literacy. From the skill-based perspective, it implicate capabilities to employment digital tools and penguin such as enhanced use of online services e.g. while navigating government websites or understanding Digital Communication Channels [7].

I. Importance of Digital Literacy

This was originally published in Hacker Noon on Medium, where people are continuing the conversation by highlighting and responding to this story. Digital knowledge is key to ensuring that citizens are able to interface with e-governance platforms. If people do not have essential digital skills, they will struggle to use government services online, participate in discussions on a digital platform or provide feedback electronically. This means that citizens and other stakeholders who are not digital literate cannot readily access these services, so the e-governance initiatives will be more effective if all local people have basic knowledge of how to use computer facilities.

II. Types of Low Digital Literacy Issues

It is still a problem for most of the world class people from developing regions to be digi-tally literate and many are not familiar with using internet based applications. In the rural areas of Zambia, for instance, where access to internet is low and digital literacy can be scarce there might as well be problems in efficiently operating e-governance platforms [7]. This digital literacy gap can impede the adoption and performance of e-governance initiatives.

III. Strategies for Improvement

A powerful national digital literacy strategy should include overall schemes addressing the level of concern if undertaken by governments or organizations. This could cover training workshops, community outreach campaigns and educational programs that target improving digital skills among different demographic. For example, partnerships with universities and non-government organizations (NGOs) would help establish specific-training programs focused on enhancing digital literacy competencies for marginalized groups.

2.7 Technological Infrastructure

Technological infrastructure is another critical factor influencing the effectiveness of e-governance initiatives. This includes the availability and reliability of internet connectivity, power supply, and technological devices [16].

I. Importance of Robust Infrastructure

Effective e-governance requires a robust technological infrastructure to support the delivery of digital services and ensure that online platforms function smoothly. Reliable internet connectivity and stable power supply are essential for the consistent operation of e-governance systems and for ensuring that citizens can access services without interruption.

II. Challenges of Inadequate Infrastructure

In many regions, particularly in developing countries, technological infrastructure remains underdeveloped. For instance, in Zambia, issues such as limited internet coverage, frequent power outages, and inadequate technological devices can severely impact the functionality and reach of e-governance platforms [16]. These infrastructural challenges can result in slower service delivery, increased frustration among users,

and reduced overall engagement with e-governance systems.

III. Strategies for Improvement

To overcome infrastructural challenges, governments and stakeholders should invest in expanding and upgrading technological infrastructure. This may involve initiatives such as improving internet coverage through the expansion of broadband networks, enhancing power reliability through infrastructure investments, and providing affordable access to technological devices. Public-private partnerships can play a crucial role in facilitating these investments and ensuring the sustainability of technological improvements.

2.8 Digital Divide

The digital divide refers to the disparity between individuals and communities with access to digital technologies and those without. Socio-economic factors, geographic location, and infrastructure deficiencies contribute to this divide [7].

I. Importance of Bridging the Digital Divide

Addressing the digital divide is essential for ensuring that e-governance initiatives are inclusive and equitable. If a significant portion of the population lacks access to digital technologies or the internet, the benefits of e-governance cannot be fully realized, and certain groups may be excluded from participating in digital governance processes.

II. Challenges of the Digital Divide

In regions with pronounced socio-economic disparities, the digital divide can be particularly acute. For example, in Lusaka, socio-economic factors such as income inequality and geographic disparities can limit access to digital technologies and the internet, exacerbating the digital divide [7]. This divide can hinder the effectiveness of e-governance initiatives by excluding marginalized communities from digital participation and access to government services.

III. Strategies for Bridging the Divide

To address the digital divide, governments and organizations should implement targeted initiatives aimed at increasing digital access and inclusivity. Strategies could include subsidizing internet access for low-income households, establishing community technology centers in underserved areas, and promoting digital literacy

programs to improve technological skills among disadvantaged groups. Collaboration with international organizations and the private sector can also support efforts to bridge the digital divide.

2.9 Broader Social – Political Factors

Broader socio-political factors can also impact the successful implementation of e-governance initiatives. These factors include resistance to change, lack of political will, and concerns about data privacy and security.

I. Importance of Addressing Socio-Political Factors

Addressing socio-political factors is crucial for creating a conducive environment for e-governance implementation. Resistance to change within government institutions, lack of commitment from political leaders, and concerns about data privacy can all impede the adoption and effectiveness of e-governance initiatives.

II. Challenges of Socio-Political Factors

Resistance to change can manifest in various forms, such as reluctance from government officials to adopt new technologies or skepticism among citizens about the effectiveness of digital platforms. Lack of political will can result in insufficient funding and support for e-governance projects, while concerns about data privacy and security can undermine public trust in digital systems [7]. These socio-political challenges can limit the success of e-governance initiatives and hinder their potential benefits.

III. Strategies for Overcoming Socio-Political Challenges

To overcome socio-political challenges, it is essential to engage stakeholders across all levels of government and society in the planning and implementation of e-governance initiatives. Building political support through advocacy and awareness campaigns, addressing concerns about data privacy through robust security measures, and fostering a culture of innovation and openness within government institutions can help mitigate resistance and enhance the success of e-governance efforts.

2.10 Addressing Challenges

To effectively address the challenges in e-governance implementation, a multi-faceted approach is required. This includes investing in digital literacy programs, improving technological

infrastructure, bridging the digital divide, and addressing socio-political factors.

I. Investing in Digital Literacy Programs

Digital literacy programs should be a priority to ensure that all citizens have the skills needed to engage with e-governance platforms. These programs can be delivered through various channels, including schools, community centers, and online platforms. Partnerships with educational institutions, NGOs, and tech companies can enhance the reach and impact of digital literacy initiatives.

II. Improving Technological Infrastructure

Governments should prioritize investments in technological infrastructure to support the deployment and functionality of e-governance systems. This includes expanding internet coverage, improving power reliability, and providing affordable access to technology. Public-private partnerships and international collaborations can facilitate these investments and ensure that infrastructure improvements are sustainable and effective.

III. Bridging the Digital Divide

Efforts to bridge the digital divide should focus on increasing access to digital technologies and the internet for underserved communities. Initiatives such as subsidized internet access, community technology centers, and targeted digital literacy programs can help address disparities and ensure that e-governance benefits are accessible to all citizens.

IV. Addressing Socio-Political Challenges

Addressing socio-political challenges involves fostering political support for e-governance initiatives, building public trust through transparency and data protection measures, and creating a supportive environment for digital innovation. Engaging stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organizations, and the private sector, can help address resistance and enhance the overall success of e-governance initiatives.

V. Collaboration and Partnerships

Successful e-governance implementation requires collaboration between government agencies, the private sector, civil society, and international organizations. These partnerships can

facilitate the sharing of resources, expertise, and best practices, and contribute to overcoming challenges in e-governance implementation. By working together, stakeholders can create a more inclusive, efficient, and effective e-governance system that benefits all citizens.

2.11 Personal Critique of Literature

While the literature on democratic governance and e-governance is extensive and provides valuable insights, there are several areas where it could be improved to better address the complexities and nuances of local government implementation, particularly in developing countries like Zambia.

I. Overemphasis on Success Stories

Much of the existing literature tends to focus on successful case studies and best practices from developed countries. While these examples are informative, they often do not account for the unique challenges faced by developing countries, such as limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-political constraints. More balanced research that includes both successes and failures would provide a more comprehensive understanding of e-governance implementation.

II. Limited Consideration of Local Contexts:

The majority of studies do not sufficiently consider the local socio-economic and cultural contexts that significantly influence the success of e-governance initiatives. For instance, factors such as language barriers, local governance structures, and community trust in government play crucial roles but are often overlooked. Research that incorporates these local dimensions would offer more practical and relevant recommendations.

III. Inadequate Focus on Inclusivity

While digital literacy and access are frequently mentioned as challenges, there is insufficient emphasis on how to make e-governance truly inclusive. Studies often suggest broad strategies without delving into specific, actionable steps that can be taken to ensure marginalized and underserved populations are not left behind. Research that prioritizes inclusivity and provides detailed, context-specific strategies is essential.

IV. Gap Between Theory and Practice

There is often a disconnect between theoretical frameworks and practical

implementation. Many theoretical models do not translate easily into actionable steps for local governments, especially in developing countries. Bridging this gap requires research that is not only theoretically sound but also practical and adaptable to different contexts.

V. Insufficient Attention to Feedback Mechanisms

The literature acknowledges the importance of citizen feedback in e-governance but falls short in providing detailed analyses of effective feedback mechanisms. There is a need for more research on how to design, implement, and sustain these mechanisms in ways that genuinely enhance citizen engagement and improve government services.

VI. Overlooking Long-term Sustainability

Many studies focus on the immediate impacts of e-governance initiatives without considering their long-term sustainability. Issues such as ongoing funding, technological upgrades, and continuous community engagement are critical for the enduring success of e-governance projects. Research that takes a long-term view and addresses these sustainability concerns is crucial.

VII. Limited Empirical Data

There is a noticeable lack of empirical data on the outcomes of e-governance initiatives, particularly in terms of their impact on democratic governance and citizen engagement. More empirical studies, including both qualitative and quantitative data, are needed to provide a clearer picture of what works and what does not.

By addressing these critiques and filling the identified research gaps, future studies can contribute to a more nuanced, practical, and inclusive understanding of e-governance and its role in enhancing democratic governance and citizen engagement at the local level.

2.12 Research Gap Analysis

Despite extensive research on democratic governance and e-governance, several gaps remain, particularly in the context of local government implementation in developing countries such as Zambia. The following research gaps have been identified:

I. Context-Specific Studies

Most studies on e-governance and democratic engagement are conducted in developed

countries, with limited research focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities in developing countries. There is a need for more context-specific studies that address the socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural factors affecting e-governance in Zambia and similar contexts.

II. Impact Assessment

While many studies highlight the potential benefits of e-governance, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the actual impact of these initiatives on citizen engagement and service delivery at the local level. Research assessing the effectiveness and outcomes of specific e-governance projects, such as those implemented by Lusaka City Council, is essential.

III. Digital Literacy and Inclusivity

Although digital literacy is recognized as a critical factor for successful e-governance, there is limited research on effective strategies to improve digital literacy and ensure inclusivity in digital government initiatives. Studies exploring innovative approaches to digital education and training in underserved communities are needed.

IV. Infrastructure and Technological Challenges

The literature often acknowledges infrastructural challenges but lacks detailed analysis of the specific technological barriers and potential solutions in the context of local governance. Research focusing on scalable and sustainable technological solutions for improving e-governance infrastructure in Lusaka and similar cities is required.

V. Citizen Feedback Mechanisms

Effective citizen feedback mechanisms are crucial for enhancing public participation and improving government services. However, there is limited research on the design and implementation of such mechanisms within e-governance frameworks. Studies exploring best practices for integrating citizen feedback into local government decision-making processes are necessary.

VI. Longitudinal Studies

Most research on e-governance is cross-sectional, providing a snapshot of current practices and outcomes. Longitudinal studies that track the evolution and long-term impact of e-governance initiatives on democratic governance and citizen

engagement are needed to understand the sustainability and effectiveness of these projects.

3. LITERATURE SURVEY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to analyze the role of citizen engagement in enhancing democratic governance through e-governance initiatives by the Lusaka City Council.

3.1 Qualitative Component

Interviews: Conduct semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including Lusaka City Council officials, ICT experts, and community leaders, to gather in-depth insights into the implementation and impact of e-governance initiatives.

Focus Groups: Organize focus group discussions with local residents to understand their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to e-governance.

3.2 Quantitative Component

Surveys: Administer structured questionnaires to a representative sample of Lusaka residents to quantify their engagement levels, satisfaction with e-governance services, and perceived impact on democratic governance.

Document Analysis: Review relevant policy documents, strategic plans, and e-governance platform data to assess the scope, accessibility, and usability of e-governance services.

Data Collection: Collect primary data through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Secondary data will be obtained from official documents and reports.

Data Analysis: Use thematic analysis for qualitative data to identify key themes and patterns. Employ statistical analysis techniques, such as descriptive statistics and regression analysis, for quantitative data to determine correlations and trends.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the research findings and discusses the results obtained from the study on citizen engagement through e-governance initiatives by the Lusaka City Council. The data collected from the survey, interviews, and focus groups is analyzed and interpreted to address the research objectives.

4.1 Demographic Profile

The study surveyed 50 residents of Lusaka shown in figure 1, who varied in age, gender, education level, and employment status. The pie chart depicting the demographic distribution shows that 40% of respondents were between 18-30 years old, 35% were between 31-45 years old, and 25% were 46 years and above.

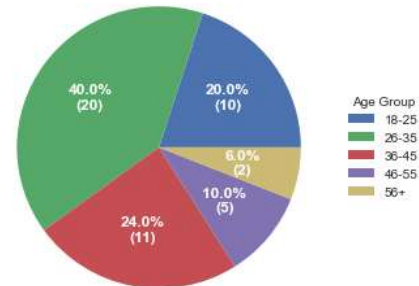


Figure 1: Study Of 50 Residents Of Lusaka In Various Age Groups

Gender distribution was fairly balanced, with 56% male and 44% female respondents (figure 2).

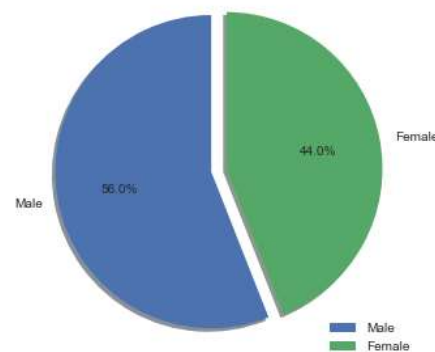


Figure 2: Distribution Of Population In Terms Of Gender

Educational attainment varied (figure 3), with 30% holding a tertiary degree, 45% having completed secondary education, and 25% with primary education or less.

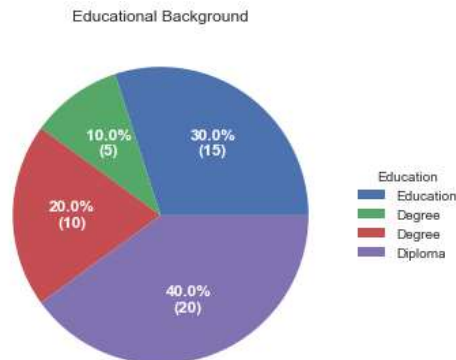


Figure 3: Distribution Of Population In Terms Of Varied Educational Attainment

Employment status showed that 60% were employed, 25% were students, and 15% were unemployed (figure 4).

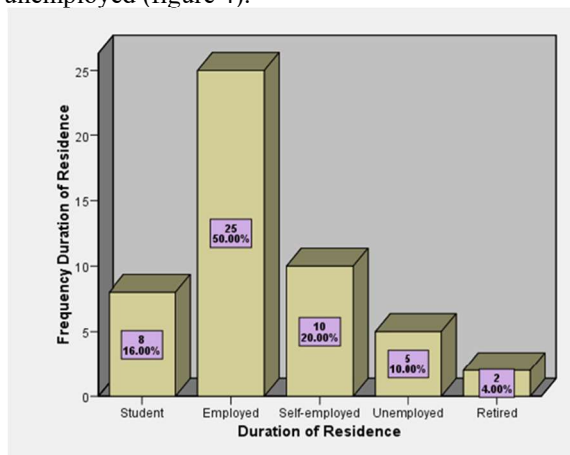


Figure 4: Distribution Of Population Based On Employment Status

Awareness and Usage of E-Governance Platforms

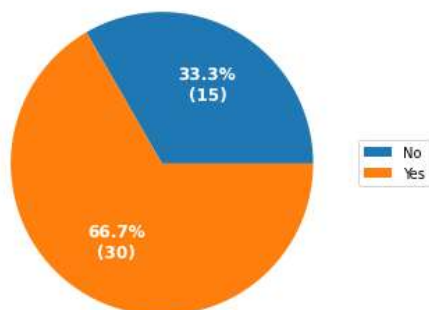


Figure 5: Awareness And Usage Of E-Governance Platforms

The results indicated that 70% of respondents were aware of the e-governance initiatives, as illustrated in the bar graph. However, only 30% reported using these platforms regularly (figure 5). This discrepancy suggests that while awareness is high, actual engagement with the platforms is moderate. The reasons for non-usage included lack of internet access, unfamiliarity with the platforms, and perceived complexity. The frequency of accessing e-governance platforms is shown in figure 6 which shows that only 10% population accesses daily, 20% accesses weekly, 30% population accesses monthly and 40% population access rarely the e-governance platforms.

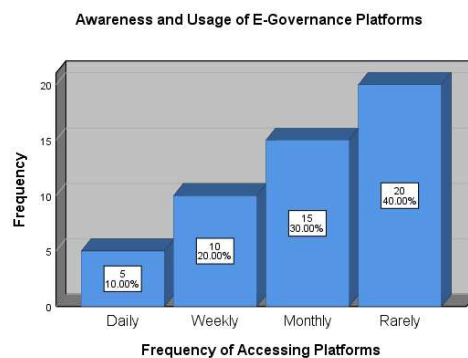


Figure 6: Frequency Of Accessing E-Governance Platforms

Residents' perceptions on the accessibility of e-governance platforms is shown in figure 7. The bar chart displaying the ratings showed that in total 74% of respondents rated accessibility as neutral, easy and very easy, while 10% found it very difficult and 16% rated difficult.

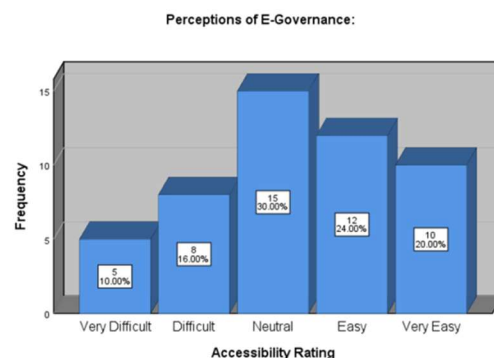


Figure 7: Perceptions On E-Governance Based On Accessibility

Residents' perceptions on ease of understanding of the e-governance platforms is shown in figure 8. Ease of understanding received a similar pattern,

with 80% rating in total as neutral, easy and very easy, and 10% poor.

Perceptions of E-Governance:

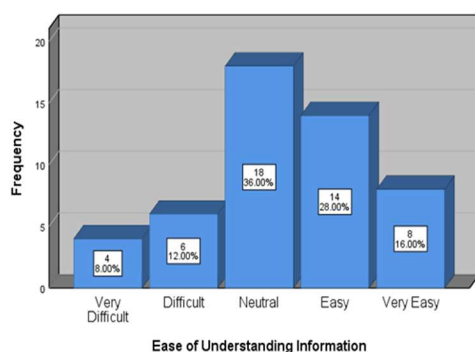


Figure 8: Perceptions On E-Governance Based On Ease Of Understanding

Engagement facilitation had lower ratings, with 40% rating it good, 30% satisfactory, and 30% poor. Overall satisfaction with the platforms was rated good by 50%, satisfactory by 30%, and poor by 20%. The perceived impact on governance was rated good by 60% of respondents, satisfactory by 25%, and poor by 15% (figure 9).

Perceptions of E-Governance:

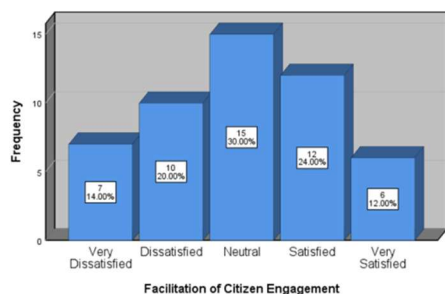


Figure 9: Perceptions On E-Governance Based On Facilitation Of Citizen Engagement

The suggested improvements and barriers to effective citizen engagement through e-governance is presented in a table 1, highlighted several key areas for improvement. Respondents suggested enhancing user interfaces and making platforms more user-friendly, which was noted by 30% of respondents. Increasing awareness and providing more educational resources on using e-governance platforms were recommended by 24% of respondents. Increased accessibility to internet, especially in underserved areas, was suggested by 16% of participants. The main barriers identified included the digital divide, lack of digital literacy, and insufficient resources and support from government institutions (Table 2).

5. DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

The relationship between the adoption of e-governance services (ADES) and citizen empowerment is examined in this study. The conditions for a successful adoption of e-governance include online citizen skills (OCS), online citizen awareness (OCA), and online citizen engagement (OCE). Consequently, it also examined how citizen empowerment functions as a mediator in the relationships between OCS and ADES, OCA and ADES, and OCE and ADES. Based on the body of current research, particularly the technological adoption model and the philosophy of citizen empowerment, an e-governance adoption model is put forth. Additionally, field data gathered from primary surveys through the use of purposive sampling is used to evaluate it empirically. The suggested research model was evaluated using a structural equation model. The findings showed that e-governance adoption is influenced by citizen empowerment. It outlines the relevant challenges that need to be resolved prior to e-governance system implementation in a developing nation by emphasising the relative relevance of online skills, awareness, and involvement in e-governance adoption [70].

Filling a vacuum in the literature, the study [71] examines how e-governance affects government-citizen relations in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study looks at digital literacy, awareness, and how well e-governance programs work to increase citizen engagement, all while drawing on Social Capital Theory and Institutional Theory. Data was carefully gathered from 100 civil servants in Oyo State who were directly associated with e-governance platforms using a descriptive research design and a standardised questionnaire called E-Governance and Government-Citizen Interaction (EGOCI). For data analysis, the study employed inferential tools. ANOVA analysis was used to examine the hypotheses. Ibadan residents had modest levels of digital literacy and awareness, according to the analysis, and most of them agreed that e-governance improved relations between the government and its constituents. In Ibadan, Oyo State, the results likewise demonstrated a noteworthy impact of e-governance on interactions between the government and its citizens. According to research, e-governance has the potential to improve interactions between the government and its constituents by raising knowledge of digital issues, promoting favourable perceptions of efficacy, and developing digital literacy. In order to

promote digital literacy and awareness, the study suggests that greater emphasis be placed on broad outreach and education programs. It also suggests that e-governance efforts be continuously monitored and evaluated to guarantee continuing progress.

Using the Telegram platform, this study [72] uses a quantitative research approach to investigate how perceived utility and ease of use affect citizen participation in Cambodian public governance. The study also looks into how public value production functions as a mediator in this interaction. The study surveys 290 Cambodian Telegram users involved in public governance activities in order to validate six hypotheses using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results show that citizen engagement is strongly and favourably influenced by perceived usefulness and simplicity of use. Furthermore, a mediating element in these connections is the generation of public value. In the particular setting of e-governance in a developing country, the study provides empirical support for the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The findings highlight the importance of prioritizing valuable and user-friendly digital channels for efficient citizen interaction, offering policymakers and public administration in Cambodia important new information. Future research directions and limitations are also covered.

The findings of this study reveal a complex landscape of citizen engagement with e-governance initiatives in Lusaka. The high awareness but moderate usage of e-governance platforms indicates a gap that needs addressing through targeted interventions. While residents generally find the platforms accessible and understandable, there is room for improvement in engagement facilitation and overall satisfaction. The study highlights the importance of enhancing user experience, improving digital infra-structure, and providing adequate support and resources to maximize the impact of e-governance on democratic governance.

The research underscores the need for continuous efforts to bridge the digital divide and improve digital literacy among residents. Strengthening institutional support and fostering a culture of engagement are essential steps towards realizing the full potential of e-governance initiatives. The insights gained from this study can inform future strategies and policies aimed at promoting inclusive, transparent, and responsive governance through digital platforms in Lusaka.

6. LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A limitation is that other nations could have different political, cultural, or technical environments than the one examined in this research, which is limited to Lusaka, Zambia. To find out whether the results are applicable to e-governance in underdeveloped countries generally, it could be important to repeat the study in other environments.

To determine whether socio-economic tendencies are constant over a bigger population, future studies should include a bigger sample size of respondents. Simultaneously, many problems that may be addressed to enhance the current research could be answered by a large-scale investigation into the rural residential section. The current study might be further enhanced by doing a societal-level comparison analysis that takes into account occupational position and the degree of civic involvement. This would allow for the development of public policies that effectively integrate individuals into the political process, regardless of their sector.

It is recommended that the proposals be taken into consideration by the government as well as the various stakeholders to fully realizing the potential advantages of electronic governance in Lusaka, Zambia, such as :

- Making investments in a greater number of internet infrastructures and digital platforms.
- The provision of education and training on the use of technology and platforms for electronic governance.
- The degree of accountability and transparency should be taken care by the government.
- The government should give high emphasis on data security and safeguards the peoples' personal information in order to attract the confidence of the citizens.
- There should be a foster collaboration between corporation and public sectors for the advancement of e-governance initiatives.
- There is a need of comprehensive review and feedback mechanism and should be established by the government.
- The government departments should work together, the citizens must actively participate in the e-governance initiatives, and government should ensure their

- participation through encouragement, feedback and awards.
- Government should take the responsibility how the e-governance services should be available to the citizens of the nation.
- There is a top priority to digitize the government's internal documentation for the better management of the data, availability of the data and quality of e-governance services.

7. CONCLUSION & FUTURE WORK

A number of significant insights have been uncovered as a result of the study that was carried out by the Lusaka City Council on the subject of public engagement via the implementation of e-governance initiatives. To begin, residents of Lusaka have a high level of familiarity with e-governance platforms; yet, their actual utilization of these platforms is still in the moderate range from what it was before. As a result of this, it is abundantly obvious that there is a need for strategies that have the potential to translate awareness into active involvement. When it comes to electronic governance systems, individuals often get the notion that they are readily accessible and do not need a great deal of effort to have an understanding of. On the other hand, there are opportunities to bring about an increase in the general satisfaction with the platforms and to make participation more convenient. In the third place, there is the prospect that initiatives that include e-governance might potentially increase the amount of accountability and transparency that exists at the municipal level. However, more efforts are required in order to maximize their effect on the decision-making processes and the outcomes of governance obligations via the implementation of governance responsibilities. In light of the findings as a whole, it is clear that there is a need for ongoing enhancements and targeted interventions in order to fully maximize the potential of e-government in the process of developing democratic governance in Lusaka. Based on the results and conclusions yielded from the investigation, it is recommended that a variety of proposals be prepared based on the results. Improving the user experience and accessibility greatly depends on raising the usability of e-governance systems using enhanced capabilities, which is the first step in the process. Regular user testing and feedback sessions help the government to identify and resolve usability

problems. Moreover, a customized awareness campaign is a strategy that could help to spread knowledge and inspire involvement. The advantages, possibilities, and opportunities of e-governance platforms should be the aim to educate the citizens. Another approach for reaching the residents and increasing the degree of involvement can be done by incentives and rewards for active participation. Finally, it is of utmost importance to extend the reach of interaction tools to appeal to many public subgroups. This covers those neglected people in the society as well as those who were born outside the digital era. The citizens having limited access to the internet, can communicate and use e-governance applications via mobile-friendly applications and text messages service. It is necessary to expand the amount of assistance and resources provided by the government bodies. The sustainability and effectiveness of the e-governance platforms can be guaranteed by the allocation of sufficient funds for their upkeep and improvements as well as by means of continuous training and capacity-building initiatives for government officials and staff members engaged in the management and running of these platforms. Through this, the efficiency and effectiveness of the systems are guaranteed. The methods of tracking and assessing the influence of citizen engagement in the implementation of e-governance in society are highly crucial activities. For the efficient evaluation of the impact of e-governance operations on openness, responsibility, and public satisfaction appropriately, the government has to set up a full monitoring and review mechanism. The feedback received from the users of e-governance platforms must be continuously updated and improved for the effectiveness of the platforms. These ideas have been developed to solve the discovered issues and maximise the chances that surfaced throughout the course of the research. The increase in the role e-governance in Lusaka plays a role in promoting democratic governance and citizen participation. This would enable the development of a local government more transparent, inclusive, and responsive that can meet Lusaka citizens' needs and aspirations. It should be a key goal for the government to bring all of its internal papers and data into the digital realm.

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TABLE I: Suggestions for Improvement

Suggestions for Improvement:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Better user interface	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Enhanced digital literacy programs	10	20.0	20.0	50.0
	Increased accessibility to internet	8	16.0	16.0	66.0
	More frequent updates	5	10.0	10.0	76.0
	More public awareness campaigns	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

TABLE II: Impact on democratic governance

Impact on Democratic Governance					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Complexity of platforms	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Lack of digital skills	15	30.0	30.0	40.0
	Lack of interest	8	16.0	16.0	56.0
	Poor internet connectivity	12	24.0	24.0	80.0
	Unawareness of platforms	10	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	